

GALLOPING DICK



BY H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON



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Galloping Dick

Being Chapters from the Life and Fortunes of
Richard Ryder, otherwise Galloping Dick,
sometime Gentleman of the Road

GALLOPING DICK



BY · H · B · MARRIOTT · WATSON ·

LONDON : JOHN · LANE ·

CHICAGO : STONE · AND · KIMBALL ·

M · D · CCCX · CVI

These Chapters have already appeared in the pages of the
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Of the Bishop's Quandary, and of the
Humourous Events that ensued.

Chapter I

Of the Bishop's Quandary, and of the Humourous Events that ensued.

THE chance seemed fallen into my hands, and without my expectation. The place was very privy; the sun stood at four of the afternoon, and already the heaven was blackening overhead. A thin cold wind whistled through the empty trees, tossing the snow in spray, and the devil of a hard night was brewing. In the centre of the road, and bare to this desolation, the carriage stood forlorn, the shafts half buried in a drift, and the broken wheel full circle to the sky. And there lay the Bishop, reclining against his cushions, with his interrogating eyes upon me.

“You say truly,” said the Bishop suavely, “the Church is ill-served by the minor clergy in some gross particulars.”

He set the tips of his fingers together, and

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complacently regarded the roof of his coach. I confess that I was mightily taken with his coolness, for he must needs have a notion of my calling, and yet there he sat, with his smug face uncrinkled, and his great body heaving placidly, as though he had been this half-hour at ease before his fire. I had the fancy to thrust him a little closer and, springing from Calypso, I drew to the carriage and leaned my arms across the window. At this new proximity he appeared to start ever so little, and glanced at me from the edges of his eyes.

“There’s the rub,” says I. “For myself, I am naturally a man of peace, who can split a weasand with his sword upon occasion. I pursue a sound life and a simple calling.” The Bishop bowed in affable audience. “I am content with what goods the world, or chance, provides. If there be some who have brought evil accusations of greed upon me, why, what matters it, if a man’s conscience be right with his Maker? And you, my lord, will surely know the calamitous and miserable calumniations put upon our poor human nature?”

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The Bishop nodded slowly. "'Tis just," says he, "for tongues will wag"; and returned to the equable contemplation of his cushions. The imperturbable air of those fat features nettled me.

"Sometimes," I resumed, "'tis true that I have fallen away from my own conception of myself. I have suffered from an egregious desire to sound of fine repute, to cut a figure in the world. That vice, we know, lies also in the heart of many a priest."

The Bishop assented gravely. "But 'tis after all but a minor flaw," said I, "in a character of cardinal virtues." The Bishop waved his hand politely, as though deprecating a matter of small import.

"And then——" said I. "But I fear I weary you?" The Bishop straightened himself upon his seat. "Indeed," he replied, "I find your case of much interest and instruction."

I vowed that I would break his resolute equanimity. "No man shall say," says I with some heat, "that the Church has not ever had my inward fealty. Leal son have I been

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to her. I have paid tithes and given charities. But ofttimes . . . i' faith"—and here I laughed—" 'twas fetched out of some noodle's pocket."

I paused. The Bishop lifted the tips of his fingers apart, and looked at me. "I fear," said he, "that there is no conscience but carries grievous burdens."

He nestled more snugly in his cushions, crossed his plump legs, and closed his eyes; and with the act seemed to dismiss me from his presence. I surveyed him for a moment in silence, and with some amazement. Not a point upon his well-ordered body but witnessed to a life of ease and dignity. He was full-fed; his spreading belly was arrogant with appetite; his broad calm face was rich with ample and luxurious wastes. He was built generously upon secure and comfortable years. And there he lay, the rough wind thrashing his warm flesh, obnoxious to the instant handling of a wild highwayman, mumbling a conversation in polite terms, unmoved by danger, and undranged by discomfort. The control of the man was so admirable that I must push it to

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its limits. "'Fore Heaven," says I to myself, "I will see this fine courage topple down, if I keep sheep by moonlight* for it." I had never a stomach for Mother Church, but this damned ugly lump was come near to turn me parson. I leaned over and tapped him on the knee. He opened his eyes with an air of weariness, and fastened them upon me with a faint gesture of apology.

"I fear I have been rude enough to fall asleep," says he.

"Indeed," I answered sharply, "'tis ill manners, as you may see, to split through a gentleman's discourse so lightly. I did myself the honour to begin you my history."

"You must forgive me," said the Bishop, with that wave of his hand. "Pray continue. To be sure—your history."

"Hark'ee," said I roughly. "You profess yourself a vicar of God. Damn and shrive—these be the transactions of your precious trade! You hold a knife to poor mortal throats, and scare 'em with hell-fires, as I

* A pretty pastoral euphemism for "hang in chains."

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might tickle those thick creases of your own. And which were the greater sin?" I asked with indignation.

"Indeed," said he softly, "you do us both injustice. But 'tis a bitter night for so long and engrossing an argument as this is like to develop between us. 'Twould please me greatly else, and if I may but see you at some other time——" He bowed, and left the invitation in his bow. "But I was to hear your history," says he. "I interrupt you. Pray proceed."

The serenity of his phrases staggered me, and I could do naught but scrape my wits up in a heap and burst out on him. "Fore gad," I broke forth, "I have stopped a man's vitals for less impudence than yours. A bloody priest, forsooth, to prate of justice and of argument! You are a man of Holy Writ. Faugh! Call me a ruffian, a cut-throat, or a vagabond—but I have broke your decalogue into a thousand pieces, and turned and shattered 'em again."

"That," said the Bishop gravely, "lies betwixt yourself and your Maker. 'Tis a pity

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in so well-favoured a youth as you would seem," and his glance strayed over me deliberately. "But I have known many ruffians like yourself in a long and lively experience."

He put his hand to his coat, and slowly withdrawing a snuff-box, tapped meditatively upon the lid. And at the sight I was divided strangely in a confusion between a roaring sense of laughter and an angry surge of ill-temper. Swinging in the balance uncertainly for a moment, I dropped with a plump at length upon the side of passion. The Bishop was staring into his snuff. I rapped a pistol over his knuckles, and when he looked up he gazed instead down the long hollows of the barrel.

"Come," says I, with a rough oath, "forth with your precious guineas, or I'll spoil the smooth beauty of those cheeks. I will have you unload your pockets, my fat vicegerent, an' I cannot force you disburden your conscience. Off with your jewels and your rings!"

The Bishop inspected the weapon without flinching, and then looked me quietly in the

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face. "You have been very tedious, my friend," says he. "Indeed, I was in some hopes that my rascals would have returned ere you had found your spirit for the job."

I could not but admire him even through my irritation, but I kept the muzzle at his head, and cried out impatiently: "Ha' done, my lord, ha' done! 'Tis ill jesting with Dick Ryder on his rounds. Out, out with your long, fat purse."

For the first time in our intercourse a slight smile gleamed in the Bishop's eyes, and his white face fell into deeper corrugations. Withdrawing the rings from his fingers, he placed them with his purse in my hand without a word, and looked at me inquiringly. I clapped the booty in my pockets with a nod of satisfaction, while dropping back into his seat he slowly re-crossed his legs.

"And now," quoth he, "you will, I trust, allow me to repose in quiet. I have had a long day's journey, and my travels are not yet at their term. Perhaps you will permit me to say that your conversation, which I doubt not

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would have engaged me very pleasantly upon another occasion, fell somewhat inopportune. I am an old man, and have tired. If you will be so good as to leave me, betwixt now and the return of my coachman with the horses I shall have the felicitous chance of sleep.”

“My lord,” I answered amiably, for my ill-humour was gone, and I liked the possession of the man, “I wish you the deepest of slumber”—he inclined his head courteously. “And if,” says I, “there is any favour you might require of me ere I go, why, damn it,” says I, “you shall have it, and welcome.”

“My good Ryder, as that is your name,” said the Bishop suavely, “nothing in the world, I assure you, save perhaps that you will adjust the window, for the night is falling very shrewd.”

I threw Calypso's bridle over my arm and bent myself to his request. As I finished, and was on the point of slapping to the door, the Bishop glanced at me. “I fear,” said he, with another smile, “that none of the guineas in that somewhat lean purse will find their way to church. 'Tis, of course, no business

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of mine. I do not presume to dictate to any man's conscience. You pay tithes, you say, and give in charity. It is excellent hearing, and I confess that I was in some hope a little earlier, when you vaunted those virtues so proudly, that some of my guineas might perchance come back to me hereafter. But it was a momentary thought only. You know your own trade. I wish you good-night. I fear 'tis a cold ride for you." And he dismissed me with a gentle motion of his hands.

Now I have ever been a fellow of red-hot impulse, and my passions and my humour mingle so strangely and vie so oddly, that I swear I can scarce tell at one moment what fit will take me the next. And at this inimitable farewell, so suavely phrased, and so courteously charged, stinging the while with such faint and friendly satire, I was so vastly tickled that I could not forbear bursting into laughter in that silent road.

"The devil take me!" says I, "I love a bishop, and to lighten a brother-wit is monstrously against my stomach. So here's for you, my

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lord." And with that I swept the purse and the rings at a motion into his apron.

The Bishop stirred and regarded me with mild surprise. Then, smiling and shrugging his heavy shoulders, he replaced the rings slowly upon his hands. "This, I take it, is not repentance?" he asked, thoughtfully.

"Nay," said I jauntily. "Take it for what you will. Call it a whim, conceive it a doting fancy for a tough old cock, or imagine me a penitent ripe for the altar. It matters not so you carry off your jewels in safety."

"You are mistaken, Ryder," says the old gentleman, shaking his head. "Were it a whim, I should expect a sharp change. Should it be a pious penitence, I should have no option save to pursue the gracious miracle—with sound religious advice and the ordinances of the Church. And if it came of a sudden appreciation of, as you say"—he paused—"myself and my poor merits"—he paused again and, having settled his rings, took a pinch of snuff—"I should have a mind to ask your company at dinner."

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“Curse me!” says I, “let us put it at that, then. The cold is peaking my bowels into a very respectable appetite.”

The Bishop dusted the snuff from his apron and fell back into his lounge. “You press me too hard,” said he, reproachfully. “I am not of so young a blood to take these sharp turns with you;” and he eyed me as if inviting speech.

“The Devil!” I retorted warmly. “I will fasten myself upon no man’s hospitality. ’Twas of your own notion.”

“An offer,” he explained smoothly, “upon a fitting occasion.”

“Well,” says I, laughing, “what occasion will better this?”

The Bishop considered me coldly. “I am to dine,” he observed, “with my Lord Petersham, who celebrates to-night the marriage of the Lady Mary.”

I laughed again. “And you with a broken coach, my lord!” I cried.

The Bishop reflected. “It is true,” he replied, “that I am in some difficulty, but my

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rascals will be here shortly. And that, too," he added, with a smiling blink, "upon the top of yourself, my friend."

"A fig for your rascals!" said I. "They are lucky if they get them a pair of horses within five miles of Wretford this night." The Bishop frowned. "The night is bleak and wild," I continued, "and the snow is piled in deep drifts upon the highways. If your coachman has the road by heart——"

"He is a stranger to these parts," interrupted the Bishop.

"Why, then," says I, "he will reach your lordship by cock-crow, if he reach at all. Or rather, we shall stumble upon his body in some gutter by the way."

"Your suggestions are drawn black, Ryder," sighed the Bishop.

"As black as the night, or my own heart, your lordship," said I gaily.

"And you would propose——?" he asked, after a pause.

"An inn close by, at which you might sup and repose with warmth and comfort. A bottle

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of wine and a roast loin of veal, my lord; and me, too, Dick Ryder, for company, in admiring witness of your estimable qualities." I concluded with a long congee, and when I looked up again he was watching me with some suspicion.

"Faith," said I, "you have reached me forth a warm invitation, and you would now withdraw? Fie, fie! my lord. But as I may not be your guest for lack of confidence, sink me," says I, "then you shall be mine, and none the worse for that."

The Bishop cocked his head upon one side and scrutinised me carefully.

"Lord, Lord!" I cried, "but here's a doubting Thomas!" And loosening my belt I flung pistols and sword upon his lap.

The Bishop smiled, and took a pistol by the muzzle in a most gingerly manner of distaste. "I have never set off a firearm but once," he mused, "and by accident it hit a grocer."

"Pooh!" said I, grinning, "'tis all one, whether of design or accident. The hole is blown, and the poor groaning soul slides

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through. And I call you to witness that 'tis not so much for the meddling of your own fingers as to secure the weapons out of my own reach, and for the sake of these insolent suspicions."

"I do you wrong, Ryder," said the Bishop gravely, "I do you wrong. But I will have none of these detestable things about me." And he pushed them from him with a little grimace of disgust.

"Why, then, let us begin," I urged. "And if you will take my mare, I will put us both upon the proper way to a comfortable retirement."

"And my Lord Petersham," said the Bishop, with a twinkle in his eye, "must wait?"

"Faith, and he must," I answered, "until our stomachs are filled, when I will myself conduct you upon the road."

"Captain Ryder," said the Bishop, lurching clumsily out of the carriage, "I am much in your debt for your insistence."

The darkness had now fallen pretty thick, and the snow lay deep and soft underfoot;

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but we made safely, if at some pains, down the bye-road which led to Wretford, the Bishop a black lump upon Calypso, and myself straddling the carriage horse which his servant had left. The wind took us in the hindquarters only, and for that I was glad, as it stung like a thousand knives upon the naked face. I was mightily pleased to be out of that bleak night and stowed in a snug warm house: and in this regard I'll warrant the Bishop was none behind me. The inn was empty; but the chamber into which the innkeeper showed us roared with flaming logs, and at the first glow of the light upon the wooden walls the Bishop turned to me and smiled. "We shall do well," he says, "if the supper be in any keeping with this show of comfort."

"And by the Lord, my lord," I put in, "you may trust Dick Ryder for that."

"And now," says he, still smiling and very affably, "is it you that dine with me, or am I determined as the guest?"

"My lord," said I, bobbing to him, for I would take him in his own vein, "we gentle-

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men of the road claim the honours of the road ; and if you will receive the hospitality of the road, your lordship's invitation shall stand over for a better occasion."

I think he was affected by the impudence of my offer, as indeed I had meant him to be, for he chuckled ever so softly, and turning to the fire warmed his hands. "So be it, Ryder, so be it," he said.

My stomach was tolerable enough when the feast was served, and I clapped my spurs under the chair and fell to with all my teeth. And none so backward was his lordship, neither. He snuffed up the rich odours of the stuffed veal with his inordinate nostrils ; he breathed in the fine-smelling spiceries with an air ; and he took possession of the table with magnificent and easy pomp. The dignified behaviour of the creature, so incongruous to his circumstances, tickled me rarely, and I could have slapped my thigh to see me there, squatting over against such company, with all the graces of an Earl at Court. And first he flings me out his napkin and spreads it evenly across

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his belly. "And now," says he, "a little grace, Ryder, will come convenient 'twixt you and me. We must e'en consecrate a feast derived one knows not whence."

He spoke so smooth and with so gentle a sarcasm that I should have been a sorry knave to have taken any offence out of his words. Indeed, I had no disposition now to look upon anything save with humour, and the phrase was pat enough in all knowledge.

"If your reverence," says I, "cannot muster prayers for both, why I'll make shift to furbish up a tag for myself."

"'Tis part of our episcopal duty," he returned, "to take charge of these small courtesies to our Maker." And with that, having muttered a scrap or so—which did well enough for me, God knows!—he whipped up a knife and fell on the victuals.

There was a fulness about his hunger which was much to my mind. The fire roared behind him, and the room was very pleasantly filled with warmth and perfume. I cannot bring to mind that we spoke much or of consequence

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for the first ten minutes. But somewhere about the third course (an extremely well jugged hare), and when for my own part the edge of my appetite was blunting, I looked up and met the Bishop's eye, which was fixed upon me meditatively. He raised his glass and sipped of the claret slowly; set it down upon the table; and pinching up his eyes the while, stared thoughtfully from it to me and from me to it again.

“Of a cold hard night, Ryder,” said he, picking out his words, “a warm soft wine lines a stomach gratefully. We oppose opposites in the meetest sense; and, to take my own poor judgment, the frankest advice, if it be for the common comfort, consists with the most polite and sacred usages of society. This wine——?” He paused and inquired of me in silence.

I brought my fist with a thump upon the board. “Sink me for a scurvy worthless loon,” said I angrily, for I was in a blush of shame to have played so evil a trick on him. I took a draught myself, and plumped down

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the glass with an oath. "'Tis so, by Heaven," I said; "cold harsh stuff and biting to the vitals." And I sprang at the door to call upon mine host.

"I felt," explained the Bishop politely, "that some point was askew in a dinner else so perfect."

I roared to the landlord, who came falling up the stairs in his fuss and fright. I took him in by the shoulders and drubbed him with round abuse. "Perish my soul," I cried, "you filthy tapster, to fub off upon the Bishop and me, this griping verjuice, that is fit not even for a surfeit of swine! Are we gutter hogs," I said, "to swill on swipes and sour the edges of our teeth on vinegar? And his lordship there of as delicate a stomach as any lady in the straw!"

There was never a wretch made so mean a figure as the rascal when I had him by the collar under this storm; but the Bishop said nothing till the fool was got off, shambling in a fit of terror, to his cellars. Then he lay back and looked at me very mildly.

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“There is a certain rough vigour in your tongue, Ryder,” said he, “and of scurril terms you have a most remarkable empire. But it sounds so strangely in my ears that it has fallen with something of a clap upon me. I will not criticise my host,” says he, “and to cross the habits of a life smacks of a meddling Anabaptist. But, an’ you must march in your full habit as a man, ‘Bishop’ were best left unsaid, Ryder, and ‘his lordship’ might with profit hold over till the blood runs cool. You will observe that I tuck up my apron for convenience.”

“You speak well, my lord,” I replied penitently, “and if you will be so good as shrive me for the sacrilege, split me, I’ll hold by your directions for the future.”

And here came the flasks with the innkeeper, which, uncorking, we dipped our noses in a rare old Burgundy. My lord held up his head and blinked at me good-humouredly across the table. “For all that I will not deny,” said he, “the value of such vigour.”

We drank again. The wine was rarely

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generous. The Bishop drained his glass and poured it full afresh. He beamed at me, and twirled the shank between his fingers and against the light.

"'Twas an admirable thought, Ryder," he said, smiling, "that you should have recalled this inn. I wonder, now, where that laggard coachman of mine may be?"

"Deep to his neck in drifts," says I, with a laugh.

"'Twould be a pity," said the Bishop, shaking his head, "an ill bed upon a bitter night. But let us hope," he added cheerfully, "that the rascal is kicking his heels by a comfortable fire."

"And drinking some such noble liquor as his master," I put in.

The Bishop laughed, showing his fine white teeth. He laughed, and drank again. "And yet," said he, moralising, "rightly thought on, Ryder, these afflictions and visitations of the weather have still their divine uses." I cocked my eye at him, in wonder, to see him break out in this preaching fashion. "They teach

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us, Ryder, to cast up the blessings of our homes, and they are uncommon fine in titillating an appetite," he ended, with a chuckle.

"And a thirst, by your lordship's leave," I added, addressing myself to the wine.

The Bishop's eyes followed the dusty flask, and lingered upon it with thoughtfulness. "We will have another," said I, promptly, rising to my feet.

"Another?" said the Bishop dubiously.

"Why, yes, another," I repeated, with decision, "I am no sand-bed, but I am no stop-the-bottle, neither."

"Well, then, another," assented the Bishop, with a sigh.

When I took my seat again, the Bishop was contemplating me with some curiosity. "You have a wife, Ryder?" he asked.

"I have as good," I answered, "and as pretty a doxy as lives this side of London. Here's to her health," says I.

The Bishop took out his snuff-box, and, tapping it very carefully, "I do not know," said he, "if there be any sufficient authority

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for the relation in canon law, but 'twill serve, doubtless, for my argument."

"And for our toast, my lord," said I stoutly. The Bishop looked at me, his eyes twinkled suddenly, and he lifted his glass. "And for our toast, as you have well observed, Ryder," he agreed.

In the pursuit of my business I have had occasion to mingle in a variety of company. I have dined with the Lord Chief Justice—not with his will, to be sure; I have encountered a Royal Prince; and I have entertained several noble ladies and gentlemen of title upon compulsion. Altogether I have a tolerable acquaintance among the quality. But the Bishop was more to my taste than the most amiable among them; and when he spoke of Polly Scarlett in such kindly terms, the friendliness went straight to my heart, and I reached over my hand and stuck it at him.

"My lord," says I, "you take me by the heart, and, 'fore Heaven, if you had a score of purses you should go free of the confraternity. As one gentleman of the road should speak to

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another, so do I speak to you. And now, if there be any toast your lordship may be nursing in his desires, do not smother it up," said I, "but unwrap it and show it forth, and I will drink it, though it should be to the topsman himself."

"I am under infinite obligations for the favour, Ryder," said the Bishop, bowing at me, "but I fear I have no one for this honour."

"Come," I protested, "roll 'em all in your mind, my lord, and turn 'em over on your tongue. I'll warrant there's a pretty woman somewhere at the back."

The Bishop seemed to consider, and shook his head gravely. "It appears, Ryder," said he, "that you are too sanguine. We will leave the tribute where it stands."

"Then," I exclaimed, "sure, we will drink without it." And I pushed over the flask.

The Bishop daintily filled his glass with his fat fingers, and we drank once more. His stomach merged over the table: it ranged collateral with the wine, and tickled me with the notion of some great vat beside the empty

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bottles. I shook with laughter, and the Bishop smiled genially. "Speaking as one gentleman of the road would to another, Ryder," says he, "I declare I have never kept such disreputable company in my life."

I have confessed the wine was rich and cordial: it flowed warmly through my veins, and set my head high and whirling like a weather-cock. And at this jest I fell to laughing louder, for the thrust appeared to me a piece of pretty wit. I smacked my thigh, and bellowed till the rheum ran over my eyes, and at last I pulled up and found the Bishop very quiet and fallen into a kind of abstraction. In my merry mood I took this ill; for a gentleman must needs complete a bargain to the end, and I hate your sour looks and solemn faces.

"Look'ee, my lord," I cried, with some choler, "if 'tis my Lord Petersham that you are regretting, why have it out, and let us finish your thoughts aloud."

The Bishop lifted his eyebrows with a faint expression of amusement. "I vow, Ryder,"

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said he, "that I had clean forgot my Lord Petersham."

"That is well," I returned, dropping back into my chair.

"But," he continued, thoughtfully, "in truth, now that you recall me to my duty, I must remember also that pleasure has an end."

He rose, and I rose with him. "My lord," I said, for I was all for a long night, "it would ill become me to press you from your duty, but if you will consider the night——"

"Ah, Ryder," he interrupted, smiling graciously, "pray do not beset a poor sinner with temptations." He stood before the fire, warming his legs. "This has been a pleasant encounter," says he, "and now I will keep you to your promise."

As he put it in that way, I had no more words against his purpose, and, having settled the score, we set forth again upon the horses, myself this time upon Calypso. The night was still very bitter, but I, at least, was warm with wine, and I think the Bishop, too, was full enough for comfort. Yet the cold edge of

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the wind somewhat reduced my fervour, and where I was rolling three-parts-free in liquor ten minutes back, I was now mainly sobered and continent of all my senses. I knew the land by rote, and we proceeded easily by lanes and windings, through a grievous slush of snow, until, at the end of half an hour, we came out on the ridge of the hill (I knew it of old) which lies in the rear of my Lord Petersham's castle.

At the cross-roads the Bishop reined in his horse, and turned to me. "I think, Ryder," said he, but courteously, "that we shall be well quit of each other here. I make a dull companion for youth, and you have, doubtless, a long ride before you."

"Dull," says, I "be damned! I'll wager upon you before all the bucks of town."

The Bishop smiled. "So rich a testimony from yourself, Ryder," he observed, "should go far to keep me in repute."

"You may have it and welcome, my lord," I answered. "And here," I added, as a noise of wheels came up the hill, "no doubt you will find some friends with whom I may leave you."

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I could hear the horses snorting and the heavy carriage creaking, as it strained slowly to the top.

“Ryder,” said the Bishop, after a pause, and looking at me quizzically, “I am like to eat worse dinners than to-night’s, and to meet much poorer entertainment.”

At that moment the heads of the horses came popping over the rise. “Why, as for entertainment,” says I jovially, for the Devil, somehow, took me all in a second, “’tis not all at an end, neither, I can promise you.” For the fancy caught me up of a sudden, and rapt me off in the maddest of whimsies; and as the carriage rolled out into the moonlight I beckoned the Bishop forward and rode up in his company. I was not two minutes over the business. There was the postilion imploring mercy on his knees, the woman shrieking, the gentleman himself swearing a stream of oaths, and my pistol through the window—the whole rare picture in a flash!

“Why, what is this?” stammered the Bishop in amazement. “What—why——” And his

Galloping Dick

horse, backing and plunging under his clumsy handling, saved me the rest of his protest. But, seizing the bridle in my left hand, I forthwith brought his nose up to the window.

“Sir,” said I, politely, to the man in the coach, “the frost holds hard, and the snow lies heavy, and my friend and I, lacking purses of our own, must needs borrow of our neighbours to carry us to that excellent host, my Lord Petersham’s. And as on this great occasion of the Lady Mary’s marriage, we should think shame to do things with a niggard hand, why, we are fain to dip deep into your pockets. I am sure,” says I, with a glance at the lady, “that this lamentable condition of my friend in particular, for I am of younger and more vigorous blood, will merit the tender consideration of the sex.”

I could have fallen off the mare for laughter, and for the first time in the adventures of that night I caught a look of consternation stamped upon the Bishop’s face. But as for the couple in the coach, they made no more ado after their first emotion. I have the repute of a manner,

Of the Bishop's Quandary

which, though it becomes me little to brag of it, carries me forward in my business without much trouble. The purses were flung out (one, as I live, at the Bishop), the window was closed, and the horses were slapping down the hill, ere the Bishop's face had lost its frown or his tongue found words. I turned and met him squarely, but I was in a sweat to keep from laughing. He bit his lip, and at the sight of his discomfiture, I could contain myself no longer, but broke into merriment. He was most horribly taken aback, I vow. But "This is unseemly, Ryder," was all he said; repeating it sharply then and there, "This is unseemly."

I gave him some foolish retort, for I was cackling like a hen, and, steering his horse round quickly, he started down the hill at a leisurely pace. But he had not gone very far ere I was on him, and catching at the reins of his horse, I gave him the barrel at his eye.

"Nay, nay, my lord," says I, "'tis discourteous to take such brief leave of a friend and companion. You shall have your share, honourably enough. Dismiss your dudgeon.

Galloping Dick

Meanness was never cried of Galloping Dick. We shall take part together. Come, you and I are engaged for a fine evening's pleasuring."

And with that I let him snatch a glimmer of the pistol. He stared at me reflectively for a space, with a frown upon his forehead, and then shrugged his shoulders after a foreign fashion of his. "It seems," said he, "that, having made free with the Devil, I must e'en abide his company."

"That is so," I retorted on him, grinning, "and 'tis not the first time the Church has made friends with him."

"'Tis a lesson," said the Bishop, continuing his thoughts, "one might protest, against bodily indulgence."

"Fie! fie!" says I, "a wit turned preacher?"

"I will have you observe, Ryder," says he, with asperity, "that I am still your guest." His ease had not deserted the man, even in his anger, and I would have made him a decent apology for the sneer, had not the rumble of approaching wheels distracted my attention.

"It appears," said the Bishop calmly, "that

Of the Bishop's Quandary

the post is well chosen, and you are like to capture all his lordship's guests."

"We, my lord, we!" I cried, laughing. "Of myself, I make no pretensions to courage, but, bucklered with a fine fat fellow like yourself, I am fit to hold the road against a regiment of his Majesty."

I declare that I had no anticipation of the event at the outset. The act was merely incidental; but when I smote the Bishop's horse upon the rump, he put up his forelegs and plunged out upon the road, fetching his head, with a crash, through the window of the carriage as it pulled up. Confusion fell in a moment, and a frightened face shrank into the interior of the coach. The Bishop himself, for he was an indifferent horseman, being heavy above the saddle, was flung in a lump across the mane, and sat looking in at the window with a very red and angry face. He was a formidable fellow, with great thick eyebrows, and I swear it was as much the contortion of his ugly features as my own appearance with the pistol that finished the business on the spot. And he

Galloping Dick

was scarce back in the seat ere the carriage was bowling away down the road. Then it was, perhaps, that I had most occasion to admire the man, for, righting himself with some labour, and settling his hat anew, he blew like a porpoise for some minutes. At the end he drew out his box with great difficulty, and, turning to me, tapped it after his habit; and, says he, snuffing: "That was the Lady Crawshaw," says he. "'Twas the last week but one I dined with her."

"I trust," said I, "that she served your lordship well?"

"Indifferent, Ryder," he declared, "indifferent only. She has a shrewish tongue, and can keep no cook of parts. Indifferent; and the wine, too, after a woman's heart." Then, "You will observe, Ryder," he said, presently, "that I am an old man, and, however exciting the adventure, that the wind bites hard."

"My lord," I replied, bowing, for I was still under the spell of his demeanour, "I can ill afford to lose so useful a comrade, and there is

Of the Bishop's Quandary

the hedge for shelter against our next enterprise."

Perhaps it was scarce what he had expected, but he made no reply.

I was already in excellent temper, for the humour of the affair fairly set my head buzzing; and on the next episode of the night I was flushed with my own roaring spirits, as though I had been still drunken in the inn. And no sooner was the sound of horses' hoofs come up the hill but I caught the Bishop by the arm and, horse by horse, we took the road. "Here, comrade," said I, "faith, we have, as it seems, a fuller job to our hands." For at the moment two horsemen cantered into the cross-ways. "Two merry young bloods from London town," says I, "who, I dare swear, have some spunk in the pair of them. But forward, forward, my bold cavalier! And we'll lay the gallants by the heels ere they so much as darkle at us." And clapping a pistol in the Bishop's hand, I pricked up Calypso and rode forward to meet them.

I swept upon the two like a whirlwind, the

Galloping Dick

Bishop by my side clinging to his pommel, his apron flapping indecorously in the wind; and ere they had sense of our business we were side by side with them under the light of the moon. At the first sight of my firearm the young buck upon the hither side drew up his reins with dispatch, and his beast came down upon its haunches, while the other opened his mouth and gaped vacantly at me.

“Hold, my pretty cullies,” says I smoothly, “for my lord and I have a little catechism for your ears.”

I tell the tale to my own discredit, but I was nigh mad with excitement and the humours of the evening had drove all my wits afloat. But the truth is that I saw the fellow fumbling at his holster, and my own pistol was at t' other's head; and so, with never a thought, I called merrily to the Bishop to stop him. “Show your mettle,” says I, laughing. “Show your mettle, my lord.”

“Why in sooth, with all my heart,” says the Bishop smartly. And with that, all of a sudden—damn me!—there was a cold nose at

Of the Bishop's Quandary

my temple, and the Bishop's face, looking devilishly wicked, smirking into mine!

The thing took me sharply aback, and there was I, staring like a fool, and, for once in my life, with never a word to say for myself. But not so the Bishop. "'Tis a pretty sort of triangular duel," says he pleasantly, "in which it seems I have the least to lose. But I trust it may be averted with a little discretion and humility. Drop your weapon," says he sharply.

He had me as safe as a fowl trussed for the table, and I could do nothing but follow his order. Thereupon the two cravens, coming to themselves, and eager to be quit with sound skins and full purses, whipped round their horses and made off; and the Bishop and I were left together in the road. My lord regarded me maliciously, and at last, breaking into a something foolish laugh, I found my tongue. "Why, one gentleman of the road to rob another!" says I. "'Tis monstrous, my lord."

"You will have a better knowledge of the etiquette than myself, who am but a novice, Ryder," says he, mightily pleased with himself.

Galloping Dick

“For a guest to rum-pad his host!” I urged.
“’Tis beyond all manners.”

“Faith, I am so new to the trade that you must pardon me if I am blind to these delicate distinctions,” says the Bishop, chuckling.

“Come,” I remonstrated, “this jest is after all in ill season. Put down that pistol.”

“The thought came into my head of a sudden,” mused the Bishop. “Indeed, it was of your own inspiration.”

“An’ you do not,” I cried angrily; “the Devil take me but I will shortly blast your ugly head from off your shoulders.”

“And ’twas well I took lessons from so excellent a master as yourself,” returned the Bishop unperturbed. “It had been disastrous to have mistook the barrel.”

“Well,” says I sulkily, “if you will act with this gross dishonour, pray, what terms are you pleased to make?”

“Why, here is reason,” says the Bishop smiling, “and a very proper spirit of contrition. And, for the night does not mend and my bones are old, I will not keep you longer.

Of the Bishop's Quandary

First, and to secure the good name of the Church which stands committed in myself, you shall return me all those purses."

"Half had been your share without this foolish piece of comedy," says I surlily.

"Which," he went on, still smiling, "I will endeavour to restore to their several owners.

Secondly, you will retire to the foot of the crossways, and I myself will watch you gallop out of sight within three minutes of the clock. Thirdly—," quoth he.

"Thirdly," says I, with a laugh. "Why here is all the fashion of a sermon!"

"And this," he observed, "is a point to which I will entreat your best attention—you will rescind my invitation to the Palace, which, you will recall, was bespoke in general, not in particular. And, for corollary to this same item, Ryder," says he, with a whimsical look, "should we meet, as by some strange chance of Heaven we may, I exact that you shall not hail me for a boon fellow before the world."

"Offered," said I suddenly, "like a worthy

Galloping Dick

Bishop, and accepted like a good highwayman. And here's my hand on it," says I.

And at that, flinging off Calypso, I sprang up at him and clutched the wrist that held the pistol.

The Bishop was fat and old and awkward, but for all that he was no child at pap, and he made a gallant wrench or two for liberty. He struggled with my hands, heaving his poor old shoulders up and down with stiff ungainly motions till I fell to laughing again, and had well-nigh desisted for laughter. But then, all of a sudden, there came a sharp little crack, a hard smack fell on my leg, and the flesh of it pinched and burned and tingled as if it had been scratched by the Devil. I hopped and danced upon the snow, and swore out my soul; and then, jerking out my sword, I limped forward, and, seizing the Bishop's bridle, put the point swiftly to his breast. He never blenched, but looked critically and with interest at my leg.

"That," says he mournfully, "is but my second shot, and the pity of it is that both hit of accident."

Of the Bishop's Quandary

I could not have helped it; his face and the words set me off once more; and dropping my blade I put my knuckles in my hips and shouted with laughter.

The Bishop waited, and when at length I came to a pause he looked at me with interrogation. "I suppose," says he, "that I shall not now have even my own half of the booty?"

"Take it," I shouted, bursting out afresh, "take it all, and go in God's name, or whoever be your master. I would not rid the establishment of such a pillar—no, not for salvation from the Pit."

And, flinging the bags at his apron, I mounted Calypso and rode off, laughing still

Of the Man from Cornwall, with an
account of what fell in Bristol Castle.

Chapter II

Of the Man from Cornwall, with an account of what fell in Bristol Castle.

Now, my encounter with Sir Ralph Leybourne, which was the original of certain curious sequels, fell in this wise. I had danced a pretty lively sort of jig across country, and was now posting for the West, several shires, indeed, being at that time too warm for my toes. It was then my usage, as it has ever been, upon such alarms to settle in a private retirement, and hear the wind blow over my head; whether 'twas with Polly Scarlett in the Ratcliff Highway, or may be in a snug corner with some other Mrs Bitchington. But of all these give me Polly for my taste. And now that the traps were out in town, and I was pictured thick in many a *Hue and Cry*, I was, for the nonce, in pursuance of this policy,

Galloping Dick

for a cheerful seclusion in the distance. So it happened that at eight of the clock on that fifth of June I set out from Sutton Valence, astride upon Calypso, and by midday drew up at a little village, a league or so t'other side of Bath. Here was a tolerable ale-house with a large bare room; and me and a red-haired stranger to fill it of ourselves.

If there be one character next to the habit of a prompt arm that best serves our profession, 'tis surely the property of a sharp observation, and so it was upon my companion that my eyes fell now with particular attention. He was a huge, lean-faced man, with tall, rough bones to his cheeks, and a pair of hard, cross-cut eyes—ugly to look on, but something superior in air, and of a certain interest to denote. Nor was his aspect pleasanter than his face, for he wore a nasty scowling look, and had the appearance of a fellow that would leap down your mouth ere you opened it. Now this was the man for my money. He challenged me, and for the love of God I could not put a name upon his business; which, as you may suppose, set me off in a twinkling.

Of the Man from Cornwall

I laid down my knife, took a draught of wine, and "Sir," says I, observing him in a friendly way, "for a townsman, as I should interpret you, you show a lively appetite." For there was he filling his belly with the meats in a greedy, hasty fashion, and never so much as a glance at me, or a civil by-your-leave.

At that he turned sharply, stared at me for an instant with a scowl, and then seeming very lumpish, "No better than your own," says he in a surly voice.

"Why, for myself," says I pleasantly, "I make no boast of an old maid's appetite. I can use a knife and platter with my fellows. But there is appetite," said I with emphasis, "and there is a ranting, roaring belly; and the one I should think shame of, save under sore needs."

"You are scarce civil," says he, with a sour face on him, and shortly, as one who would be at no trouble to pick up a quarrel or pass a pat rejoinder. But I was in no humour to be thus put down.

"Why, then," said I, "to be civil is to sit

Galloping Dick

stark before your meats, gulping like a hog, and for two gentlemen to lower across the table upon one another. If that be civility," says I, "damn your civility," I says.

The fellow went on with his meal without even the compliment of a word, at which I was somewhat nettled; but seeing I was embarked upon the sally, Dick Ryder was not the man to cry quits with an ugly-visaged, cross-grained, country-bred oaf. And it struck me, too, at the moment that the cully might be one of my own calling, and in much the same plight as myself; for 'tis notorious that some of our trade are surly rascals enough, with no more manners than a jackal.

"If it be," I resumed tartly, "that a pair of good eyes and a leash of sound legs and arms would be the better wanting in your company, then I take you," says I, "and, faith, I am in the heart to tolerate your reputable dudgeon. But I would have you to learn, my friend, that suspicion breeds suspicion, and that he is a fool who would not dare to carry off his case with a firm, high hand."

Of the Man from Cornwall

“What do you mean?” he asks, in a startled voice.

“I am no head at a guess,” says I, sticking my finger at the thick, red soils upon his boots, “but I swear I can pin a point upon honest Quantock mud.”

I vow I never saw a man’s face flame to such a sudden passion. His colour blew as strong as his hair, and he clapped his hand to his sword, muttering very angrily and with a suggestion of terror.

I laughed, and poured out a glass from the bottle. “Mark me,” said I, with good humour, “’twas of *honest* Quantock loam I spoke. And ’tween you and me I’ll warrant we are acquainted with the discrimination.”

“I am come,” says he sulkily, “from Worcester.”

“And sure,” says I, smiling, “that will serve very well to explain a monstrous appetite; and the rather that the road is poor, and the topsman hath a heavy hand.”

Now he looked at me, as I saw, in some perplexity, and with an ingenuous frown of

Galloping Dick

wonder; and with that I knew that I was taken up with a wrong notion, and I drew up mighty sudden, as you may fancy. Presently his eyes fell, and with an indifferent lift of his shoulders he resumed his guttling. It tickled me so to see his unhandsome gestures and his lumpish manner at table that, though I was ruffled by my rebuff and was casting about for some new gate, I could not refrain from laughter. I dropped my glass and chuckled forthright. At which he started again.

“What the Devil——?” says he savagely. “Gad’s my life, may a gentleman not pass his meal in peace, but you must bawl him out of comfort?”

“Rot me,” says I, opening my eyes, and with some choler. “Here’s a pretty piece of insolence. And may a gentleman not hug a jest with himself, but must go forth, forsooth, and split himself among the dogs? Stab me,” says I, “my young gentleman, you will neither be merry with me, nor suffer me to be merry alone.”

He stared at me, as though about to retort upon me, but apparently thinking better of his

Of the Man from Cornwall

course. "I beg your pardon," said he, but too bluntly for courtesy. "I was mistook."

"Why, come now," says I amiably, "you make amends like a man of honour, and I will do myself the favour of asking you to a glass with me."

An expression of annoyance beset his features, but he durst not well decline me, and, indeed, I was in no spirit for refusal. I shifted up my chair within reach, and we jingled our glasses.

"A pint of warm wine," said I genially, "is the finest specific for an empty stomach these mild days."

Considering that he was then three-parts through a capon, with pasties to boot, here was a pretty point enough, but he took no notice of the sally.

"True," he answered, briefly. And finding him thus so much disposed to conversation I pushed back my chair, and, lolling in it, surveyed him with a friendly care. I was now less than ever at the knowledge of his calling, but I was to make a smart push for it.

Galloping Dick

“Goods,” says I, smiling broadly, and with an air of intelligence, “are sunk most dismal low this season.”

“Ah!” says he, vacantly.

“Why,” I went on, seeing he kept his tongue, “there was a dozen pieces of holland sold in London last week, and that of the finest, at no more than four shillings the ell.”

“Ah!” says he again, and adds, “Indeed!” indifferently.

“You may well say that,” says I, “but ’tis a fact of my own knowledge. Broadcloth, silk drugget, and brocades — ’sbud, I know not which lies in the worse case in the markets. Now, in your own experience,” says I, “what price have you put upon——”

“Why, man,” says he, interrupting me sharply, “what the Devil! Do you take me for a——” and there he stopped mighty quick. “O well,” says he in another voice, “yes, yes, I find ’em one as bad as another,” he says.

“And black Colchester bays?” says I.

“Ah, yes, yes, that too,” says he, nodding: “Colchester bays, too.”

Of the Man from Cornwall

I could scarce hold from laughing at the droll creature, as he sat wagging his head sagely upon terms he had never so much as heard, and casting restless shots out of his cross-eyes upon me. But I sat grave enough, and looking to him of a sudden.

“But you,” says I, in a tone of inquiry, “will be no snip, I’ll dare swear?”

“Damme, no!” says he, flushing in a moment, and then adds hurriedly, “Well, no—not a snip—no, not quite, that is,” and fell to frowning uncomfortably.

“No,” said I cheerfully, “I took your measure when I first set eyes on you. But your sword—’twas that put me off in the start. But now,” I says, laughing, “I understand how you come by that.”

“Oh, yes, now, of course,” he replied, echoing me a bewildered laugh of his own.

“Does it pay you well?” I asked.

“Pay?” he said, stupidly. “O well,” says he, “tolerably, tolérably.”

“I’ve had half a mind to it myself,” said I, meditatively. “In these hard times a man may

Galloping Dick

do very much worse." He nodded. "And with good honest fare," says I, "and the price of a flask now and then." He nodded again, frowning more than ever. "And on a particular private service, a guinea from one's master." He drew up his red head, staring at me haughtily. "Specially," I went on, "for a secret service to carry letters——"

To say the truth I had wellnigh forgot the premier business of my adventure; so tickled was I to put this egregious fellow upon prickles. But at my last words, and ere the full sentence was off my lips, he turned of a sudden deathly pale, stuck his hand again to his sword, and took a fit of shivers.

"Damnation!" he cried, all in a blaze of fury.

He squinted abominably as his eyes racked me, and one hand crept in a tremor to the cuff of his jacket. Now, I am a man of speedy wits, as indeed 'tis needful in my trade, and in a flash I was aware that I had come upon some more desperate affair than I had imagined. Moreover, the real meaning of his appearance

Of the Man from Cornwall

there, I know not how, ran suddenly in my head. But I was my own master, in despite of this; and though, for sure, I felt like whistling, instead, keeping a very demure face, and answering his look with mere surprise, I said: "What is it?" said I. "You ha'nt been robbed?"

He glared at me speechless half-risen in his seat, and occupied in gulping his emotion.

"Faith!" I said, with a grin, "an' you present the lady with the letter in a face like that, I'll warrant you, she shall have a fit, and you a beating from your master."

He gave vent to a snort of relief, as it seemed, and fell back in his chair, pretty limp. "Ha' some more wine," says I, cheerfully. He gulped down a draught, and the colour ran into his cheeks again. He even looked at me with a sickly grin.

"I feared," said he, "I had forgot the *billet-doux*."

"Ha, ha!" says I in a manner of raillery, "sink me! but you're a fine rascal for a love-sick gentleman. And I'll swear, too, 'tis no less

Gallopig Dick

than an assignation." He nodded, with a miserable kind of wink, and bobbed his nose into the wine, seeming very much pleased with himself. But now I was gotten very big with the notion I had in my head and looked to put it to the test. Indeed, I miscalled myself a fool in that the idea had not taken me earlier, with all those stirring rumours from the South, where that silly cully of a Monmouth, was setting the country-side by the ears. The splashes upon my neighbour's feet and legs lay as thick as a Devon brogue might ha' laid on his tongue, and I could almost swear to every mile since he had ridden forth of Tiverton. And with that the shape of my new behaviour came to me boldly.

"Look'ee," says I, speaking earnestly. "Across the main length of this table when I first crossed my legs under it, I liked the fancy of you; and though 'twas in a fashion of snarling you showed your teeth at me, why I mind you none the worse for a fire-eater."

"Go on," said he, regarding me with wonder.

"Come, then," I went on. "You're too good a lad for this fetching and carrying. Your

Of the Man from Cornwall

sword brags too loudly for the business. There's a cut about your face that derides you at it; and your hair is not the colour of a lackey's periwig. If I was you," says I, "sink me, but I'd set up myself for a gentleman of fortune."

"What would you have me do? Where should I turn for a living?" he asked, looking amused.

"You talk of living," says I with a wink. "But, mark'ee, young fellow, there's also dying. And a man may die with his sword in his fist—the faster the better."

"Well?" he says, grinning.

I bent over, and tapping him on the shoulder, said, very mysteriously, "Come with me," says I. He lifted his brows, interrogating me. "Oh yes," says I, "but there's many a good man is like to follow where I am for."

"Where is that?" says he.

"Why," says I in a whisper, "to the side of King James III," says I, "by the grace of God, King of England and Scotland and Lord of Ireland."

Galloping Dick

I felt him give a sudden start under my hand, but, taking no notice, I winked at him and nodded.

“Oh!” he cries, looking close at me, and speaking in a lower voice, “so you’re for the Prince, are you?”

“Hush!” says I, looking about me. “This ground is not safe.”

He followed my looks with a little display of timidity, and then returned to the contemplation of myself. He inspected me narrowly, and afterwards dropped his eyes, shrugging his shoulders.

“I am no hand with a sword,” said he.

I was no longer in any doubts. He was certainly from the seat of the insurrection, and as like as not with important papers. Indeed, his whole bearing was of a man that feared to be taken. But I pressed him a little closer.

“Ah!” I cried, feigning to rally him. “But I can see you have used a gully upon requirement. Think on it. I’ll vow to further you. An’ his Sacred Majesty had ten such swords as mine he would be in no needs of whistling for more, and

Of the Man from Cornwall

James of York were best-a-sporting with his newest doxy."

Now, I will acknowledge 'twas my own default, for I had put myself all along upon his own level as a gentleman's footboy; and he, poor man, must perforce take me at my own reckoning. But when he broke out into his harsh satirical laughter, it made me mad.

"Oh, his new Majesty is in luck," says he laughing, "with a sword such as yours at his call. And as for James Stuart——" Here he fell a-laughing in a loud rasping country fashion that was ill for me to bear.

My temper is of the quickest, and, whoever he might be, I was not for suffering the insolence of a dung-fork like him.

"Faith, then," said I, starting red, "since you show such an appreciation of my sword, 'tis at your service."

"Pish, man," said he, still laughing, "sit down."

But I was fair boiling now, and the thought that he could thus entreat me with such good-humoured indifference out of a belief that I was

Galloping Dick

the poor huckster I had made myself out, made me the more resolute to show my mettle. I rapped my sword out sharply.

“You are pleased, sir,” said I, fiery-red, “to laugh at me.”

“Why,” says he, with the first twinkle in his eyes that I had seen, “and may not a gentleman hug a jest to himself, but must rather go forth among the dogs for his laughter?”

I was a little staggered at his ready use of my own rebuke, but I was equal to him in a moment.

“True,” I says, “your jest is your own, poor though it be. Laugh an’ you will. But damn me,” says I, “you shall not squint at me.”

At that he turned scarlet himself, and scowling at me, “You’re an impudent rogue,” says he.

“Draw,” says I, and made at him.

He whipped out his iron, and was putting it up with a black expression on his phiz, when all of a sudden a noise of voices and stamping in the passage interfered between us. His

Of the Man from Cornwall

weapon dropped, as indeed did mine also. He stared at the door fearfully, and next at me. Nor was I myself very comfortable, for, as you are aware, I was then in particular demand at half-a-dozen Assizes.

“What is this?” he asked, speaking very low.

“Why,” says I, with a sort of laugh, “it seems someone has come with a *billet-doux* for one of us.”

He took a sudden rush at the window, but on that instant the door was flung open and a packet of soldiers broke into the room. My companion turned, sword in hand, and so again did I, not knowing what colour affairs were taking. But of me they took no heed, for it seems that they had full notice of their man, and had indeed been on his heels a matter of two days. And so, while we two stood in great disconcert and irresolution, a young man, somewhere near my own height, and of a very lively cast of face, stepped out of the troop, sword in hand, and confronted the man from Cornwall.

Galloping Dick

“Mr Baverstock,” says he, with a bow, and bringing his hat to his knees, “I regret that you must consider yourself my prisoner.”

The chamber sounded with the clank of spurs, and the doorway filled with dragoons; but my man was as game as a bantam, or rather as a bubbly-jock, for he was now the colour of his hair all over.

“Prisoner be damned,” he cried with a sneer, and ran upon the other without more ado.

But the Captain, for so I understood him, took a step back and made play with his point. He stood as cool as a fencing-master, and was more than the match of my squinting friend, who, for all that he made a smart show, being far gone in passion, soon concluded the affair on his own account. Presently I saw the soldier’s rapier bend and glimmer; there was a jerk and a twitch, and Master Red-Head’s toasting-fork was flying in the air above my head. In a second the privates moved up, and had their prisoner in hand. The thing fell with such dispatch that I could not but admire the ease of its process, but ’twas as much the spunk of the

Of the Man from Cornwall

man Baverstock as the skill and nicety of his opponent that took my fancy; and "Bravo!" I cried, "bravo!"

Thereupon the Captain turned, and seeming to observe me for the first time, looked me up and down, and ended with a good-humoured grin in my face.

"And who the Devil may you be?" says he, smiling.

"Rot me, Captain," says I, "as to that, think of me merely as one that lacks the occasion to try swords with you."

"As to that," he replied, observing me closer and with more interest, "maybe we shall better the chance in good time."

"Why, yes," says I, on an impulse I could not withstand, for the man drew me so. "And here's to the opportunity."

And with that I filled a glass, and pushing it at him lifted my own to my lips. He eyed me askew, in a fascinating way he had, from under his bent brows, and then burst into laughter.

"And here, my good sir, is to the opportunity," he said.

Gallopig Dick

This took me right in the stomach for fellowship. "And 'fore gad," says I a little roughly, "we'll break a bottle on it."

He tossed off his wine. "And 'fore gad, sir," says he gaily, "we will."

And thus it was that I became acquainted with Sir Ralph Leybourne. I called for the landlord, and Sir Ralph sat down, but then, seeming to recollect, turned to his prisoner, where he stood gloomily within a ring of the dragoons.

"Mr Baverstock," says he, "I am no thief-taker, nor no spy-catcher neither, and if a gentleman of good west-country blood shall choose to set himself up a new sovereign, 'tis nothing against his gentility whatever it be to his oath. But an' you will give me your word, you shall stay here, and," here he swept a graceful bow towards me, "perhaps this gentleman will suffer me a guest and to order for us all."

But Baverstock, if that was his name, merely gave him a savage look. "I will give no word," said he.

Of the Man from Cornwall

Sir Ralph shrugged his shoulders. "As you will," he said in another voice; and then to his men, "You had better lay in a stock of food for yourselves, and see you hold your prisoner fast," he says.

When they were gone he turned to me smiling, and, "It seems," says he, "that in the hopes of cutting out each other's hearts we must first grow friends over wine."

"Why not?" said I stoutly. "I love a gallant sword, and a passage-at-arms is a sure passage to friendship."

"In this case 'tis the bottle," he objected.

"Bottle or blade," said I, "I will find some way to your heart, Sir Ralph."

He inquired of me with his eyes for a moment with a sort of indifferent good-humour. "Let us drink, at least," said he, "I'll warrant we will both make friends with the wine."

I regarded him closely as we drank. He put back his head and swallowed the liquor at a gulp, winked at me, and then, noting some tangle in his lace, slowly combed it out with his long white fingers. He was much taken

Gallopig Dick

up with this same lace, stroking out his ruffles and preening himself with a fastidious taste. And then he seemed, at last, to remember me again, and looking at me showed his teeth.

“Another glass, eh?” he observed. I nodded, and we refilled our glasses.

But then again, after he had drunken, his attention wandered like the eyes of a light o’ love. He hummed a ribald snatch of song without more consideration of my presence than if I had been a boy, and his glance strayed about the room. But presently returning to himself and finding me staring at him, says he, in a very winning fashion, “Well,” says he, “do I find grace in your sight, O Lord?”

“Sir Ralph,” said I, “you warm my heart. You’re the man for me if there’s never another in the world. As for women, damn ’em,” I says.

At this he was pleased to go off into merriment, rapping his glass upon the table in applause, and, throwing back his handsome locks,

Of the Man from Cornwall

“Why here is praise,” says this popinjay; “fie, fie,” and laughs immoderately. And then, “Why where is my manners,” he cries, “to have sat down to wine without a knowledge of my worthy host?”

“My name, Sir Ralph,” said I, “is Ryder, at your command, and I pursue the life of a gentleman of ease.”

“And a damned good calling,” he says heartily. “And I’ll swear you make an excellent living of it.”

I looked at him with a suspicious eye, for the turn of his words took me aback; but he regarded me very innocently. And “You are a friend, then,” he asked, “of my poor Baverstock, there?”

“Friend!” says I, “as much of a friend as to be drawing upon him on your interruption.”

“Why,” he says laughing, “a very proper sign of friendship—as we agreed.”

“I cannot abide sour looks,” I said.

“Aye,” said he, “he is of a fanatical design; and so, in sooth, are they all. I have never clapped eyes on His Gracious Majesty King

Galloping Dick

James, but I am a good servant of his, and the King is the King, and there's an end. While, as for his Grace of Monmouth, Mr Ryder, he is a fool who should think one should be born a bastard and begotten a king."

"You speak my own sentiments," said I.

He rose now, and sweeping off his hat, with his heels together, "Mr Ryder," he said mockingly, but with no shadow of offence in his voice, "God or the Devil imposes an end to pleasant company, and we must now part—I to my service and you to your ease."

"Until we meet," I put in, and returning his bow with as much magnificence as himself.

"Ah!" he replied, "I have an uncommon bad memory. But you must jog it, Ryder, you must jog it."

I accompanied him from the inn, and when we were got into the open, there was all his little company scattered under the huge elm before the doorway, and the man Baverstock set somewhat apart in the charge of two dragoons, looking very black and disconsolate.

Of the Man from Cornwall

I had some pity for the fellow, for he was by no means white-livered, and drawing near, gave him a friendly sort of glance. He looked back at me startled, and with a sudden light in his eyes, and appeared to consider very deeply. Then, keeping a wary gaze upon his guards, edged off towards me as near as he dared. There was a commotion of chatter under the elm, and this proceeding went unnoticed. But it was something of a surprise to me, who at the moment had no guess of what the fellow wanted. But when he was come close enough, he spoke very hurriedly and in a low voice.

“Sir,” says he, “are you a true man? and are you, in truth, for Monmouth?”

“To the first, yes,” said I promptly, “and as to the second, why, after that, ’twill need no answer.”

He made, as though to search me right through with his squint. “I must e’en trust you,” he whispered. “See here, I am taken upon a journey of vast moment. But that’s no matter for myself, if it were not for what I carry. I have about me papers that must

Gallopig Dick

soon be dragged forth and paraded before James Stuart's eyes. You——” He paused and looked at me very troubled.

I put out my hand, for the man's courage was agreeable. “I will deliver them,” says I, “or burn them.”

For a moment more he wavered, and next, with a shifty glance behind him, “I must trust you,” he says desperately, and with a nervous action of his fingers began plucking at his long cuffs. But at that instant, and ere more could pass between us, Sir Ralph's voice broke in like a pistol-shot.

“The Devil take you, Ryder,” said he angrily, “stand aback there, or you and I shall have to make of that little affair a matter of business rather than of diversion; and that mighty soon.”

Baverstock dropped his hands, aghast, being the next second in the clutch of the soldiers; while as for me, this smart command was hardly to my custom.

“The sooner the better, Sir Ralph,” said I, as sharp as himself. “And I have yet to

Of the Man from Cornwall

learn that a gentleman may not have speech of a gentleman, wherever King James or King Monmouth may poke in his nose."

"Indeed," says he, "Captain Ryder, as you yourself should know, there are bounds to the liberty of the road."

He had given me a title for the first time, and my renewed suspicion of his meaning, together with the malice of his answer, went direct to my marrow, and forthright I drew on him. But he shook his head, laughing again in his old temper.

"Not now, Captain," says he, "but later, maybe, you will give me another chance."

For all that my blood was hot, I was fain to admit he came off with the better grace; but he bore such an air with him that I put up my sword without a word, and watched him in a mixture of fury and admiration. The men were mounting in their saddles, and he now joined them. Never had I encountered with a man so much of my own kidney. We were as like in disposition and in quality as two oranges, and upon the High-Toby

Galloping Dick

(to which he was a sore loss) he would have achieved an admirable practice. And yet I was like at that time to have disengaged myself from his life once and for all, had it not been for what followed immediately. The troop, being now in order, with Baverstock in the thick of it, was wheeling off upon the Bristol Road, Sir Ralph at the head, when, shifting in his saddle, he waved his sword to me merrily.

“To our next meeting, Captain,” he cried, “and prythee, an’ thou lovest me, let it fall soon, and upon a fine night and a good road.”

“Damn me,” I shouted, the blood singing of a sudden in my head, “but you shall find no quarrel with date, nor time, nor circumstances, or hang me for a cutpurse.”

I heard the sound of his laughter, as the horses took the corner; and it was there and then I got the resolution. I had no more liking for Baverstock than I should spend upon an attorney; save that he was a fellow of spirit. But I had acquired a strange fancy for Sir Ralph, and it maddened me that he

Of the Man from Cornwall

should have thus put a mock upon me. Well, the enterprise was come upon my hands, and I was now for seeing the end, the more resolutely for his taunt. My wits are quick enough, and I had the true course of my policy ere you could hop out of a saddle. So it was that, after a moment's reflection, I called for my reckoning, and, climbing Calypso, struck my spurs into her flank and made by the crossroads for Bristol. I reached the town, somewhere, as I guessed, within an hour of Sir Ralph's company; but I was not precipitate for the surprise; I must needs leave a while for strategy; and so, putting my mare to her bed, I made my quarters at a little hostelry within the heart of the town. 'Twas not until the morrow, and near the stroke of six, that I set foot first within the precincts of the Castle. Colonel Biddulph was a bluff man by reputation, with an open affection for the bottle; but, whether or no he was in wine I know not. I confess he met me very roughly indeed. Upon hearing my business, though he was obviously well pleased with my informa-

Galloping Dick

tion, he used me with such contumely that I was hard put to it to keep from his cravat. He cross-questioned me sharply, and when I stuck to my story, turning on his heels without further words, called one of his servants to bring Sir Ralph Leybourne. I smiled to myself to imagine his astonishment upon seeing me there in the Governor's room and about this business, but indeed upon his entrance he disordered me with his first shot.

"Hullo!" cries he, quite gaily. "What, my pet knight-errant in this respectable company! Captain Ryder," says he, shaking his finger at me, "ha' you come for the bottle I owe you, that you figure thus boldly in the precincts of justice?"

"What, do you know this fellow?" says the Governor in an amaze.

Sir Ralph peers at me roguishly. "Well, sir," said he, "if my eyes be still in my head, it should be a truculent gentleman whom I met yester morning at the Three Thorns out of Eckhurst."

"Ah," says the Governor. "Well you shall

Of the Man from Cornwall

deal with him, as you know him. He is a rogue who is to do us the service of finding the dispatches upon Baverstock for a consideration. See him brought to the prisoner, and watch him carefully."

At this, Sir Ralph seemed a good deal staggered, and a very different change came across his features.

"Hum!" said he, "'tis a dirty business, for which I have no stomach."

The Governor motioned me to follow, which I did in silence, for though I was much mortified I held my temper pretty tight, being resolved to settle the account later, and to my own satisfaction. But Sir Ralph was of too cheerful and lively a nature to be long silent, and as we proceeded to the cells he could not refrain his tongue. It was: "Hark'ee, Ryder, and I take leave to say you're a damned canting rascal," and then in a high-pitched arrogant voice: "And keep a good yard to the fore, Ryder, lest I nose you for a stinkard;" with many other little jibes of the like colour. But all the time I kept my teeth together, and without

Galloping Dick

ever a sign on my part we came at last to the dungeon in which Baverstock was cast. Flinging open the door, Sir Ralph bade me enter, and there I stood in the presence of the man I was to betray. He seemed surprised to see me, as he very well might be, but there was no time for looks, for Sir Ralph curtly ordered me to my job.

“Here’s a friend of yours, Mr Baverstock,” says he, “who has taken a sudden fancy for King James, and is come to show it on your own person. I am very sorry for you,” says he.

Baverstock regarded me at the first with wonder, and with growing suspicion, and then with a horrible glare of hate. He uttered an abominable oath, and turned to Sir Ralph, who stood looking out of the window.

“Sir Ralph,” he says, “you are at least a gentleman like myself. Is this the orders that I shall be subject to the familiar insults of a villainous footboy?”

“On the contrary,” said Sir Ralph drily, “I believe him to be a very accomplished highwayman.”

Of the Man from Cornwall

“Sir Ralph,” says I sharply, for I would put up with this no longer, “an’ this business is to be done, it must be done in your presence. I shall be obliged, therefore, for your face.”

He whipped round quickly and shot an angry glance at me.

“Nay, my good scoundrel,” he said. “’Tis not a job to my stomach. A turnkey shall serve your turn.”

Thereupon he was stamping towards the door when I stopped him.

“Sir Ralph,” says I in another voice, “there’s need for you and me to finish this matter atween us. ’Tis true that the gentleman yonder has about him certain papers of value. I had it from himself. Moreover, ’tis certain also that I know where they are hid.”

Baverstock glared at me, and Sir Ralph bit his lip and frowned.

“Well?” he cried impatiently.

I laughed. “Turn the key i’ the lock, Sir Ralph,” says I, “for the opportunity of our quarrel is now come, and we must risk no interception.”

Galloping Dick

He started, and opened his mouth, and then fell to whistling slowly, while a pleasant smile grew on his face.

“Why, damn me, Ryder,” says he, “what a strange rogue you are, for sure!” He paused, looking at me thoughtfully. “But this is madness, Ryder,” says he, presently.

“Come, come, Sir Ralph,” said I; “let me jog your memory.”

He was still staring at me, but seemed to wake up, and broke into a merry laugh. “What, you would make a rescue!” he cried.

“I would give you the occasion you have asked,” said I, bowing.

Again he paused, and at last, “By God! Ryder,” he cried, “cutpurse, canter, or gentleman of the road, you’re a man after my own heart.”

“Here’s a pair of us, then,” said I, smiling.

And, “In truth, I will not deny the company,” says he; “but,” he added, “I have a mind to spare you.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Come,” he says, “I have already forgot

Of the Man from Cornwall

this gentleman's hiding-place. Is't in his boots, eh? or perchance in his red hair? I vow I misremember, and yet I swear you did your business."

For answer I drew my sword on him, but as yet he made no movement."

"My poor Ryder," he said, "know you not that, should I not finish you myself, there's a score of stout fellows without the door?"

"Pooh!" said I. "And there's a key to the door."

Suddenly he turned, and stepping to the gate of that dungeon shot the bolt softly. "I wash my hands of you," said he, drawing his own weapon at last. "But stay, we must not fight here, or the noise will reach the sentries."

He seemed to consider, and then going to the further wall, took a key from the bunch he held, and turned it in the lock of a second door which was half-hid by the darkness.

"Here's the room for our entertainment," he said, and following on his heels I found myself of a sudden enveloped in the blackness of night.

"We may not fight here," said I.

Galloping Dick

“And why not?” he asked, laughing. “We shall meet then on level terms, for I would not take you at the disadvantage of my skill—thief though you be.”

“Damn you!” I cried angrily, “what is this gabble about thief? Come, put up your weapon, an’ you will fight in the dark.”

Now the chamber, as I have said, was of the thickness of a foul night, there being no entrance for the light, as I discovered afterwards, save by a little low window looking forth on a deep ditch, the which was now involved in the fall of evening: so that neither he nor I might discern between the shadows. I heard him try the point of his sword upon the stone floor, but by this, and the door being shut, I had lost all count of his direction; and then he called to me, his voice coming from the further end of the dungeon.

“Are you ready, Ryder?” he said.

I gave him the answer in a clear voice, that he might be at no disadvantage from ignorance of my position, and then moved openly into the centre of the chamber.

Of the Man from Cornwall

“Your spurs clank,” says he. “You had best take ’em off, my friend.”

“An’ you hold not your tongue,” says I, “it will answer my spurs well enough.”

He laughed.

“Have at you,” says I, and made a thrust for the sound. But he must have broke away at the moment, for my point took nothing but empty air, and I was wellnigh my length upon the floor.

For himself, he made no noise, and a silence fell upon the dungeon, broken by little sounds and starts from everywhere, for the wind and the rain were playing without, and the human noises within, if there were any, I might not dissever from these signals of the storm. And so for a time there was no transaction upon the part of either. What he was at, I know not, nor indeed had I the least inkling of my own intention, save to watch and to listen in jealous circumspection for my own person. It was like no fight upon which I was ever engaged, and I did not favour the notion of it. For there was I on my side waiting in

Galloping Dick

the horrid blackness, sword in my hand, eager for every sound amid the uproar of the elements, and expectant to be lanced through the groin any moment by the man, for whom I was so far from having any bitterness but I would gladly have shook hands with him there and then. You must conceive me, in this notable predicament, and regretting the job with all my heart, while I listened, straining like a cat at bay. And suddenly a brisker noise to my left set me spinning round, and I struck out fiercely. At the same moment our weapons clinked together, and the next instant his point was stinging in my arm. "Touched, Ryder, touched," said he merrily; and at that, feeling the prick, and being now gotten to quarters, I fell sharply to the exchanges with a better stomach.

'Twas a Bedlam business, and I can mind the feel of it to this day. Our swords clinked and clashed, but according with no rules, owing to the remarkable blackness. At the first he whistled away, but by-and-bye, warming to the work, and, as I suppose, losing something

Of the Man from Cornwall

of his breath, he gave up, and I heard only now and then the noise of his hard breathing. We had by this both grown very serious, and I'll warrant that he wanted blood of me for his pricks as much as I demanded it of him. And then, as it fell out, the tip of my blade took his shoulder. He swore under his breath.

"'Sdeath, Ryder," he cried, "'tis the way to my gizzard. Here's for yours," and came at me more hotly

And this state of affairs ran on for something over the half-hour, so that we soon came to feel worn. I felt now that I had the uppermost of him, being at once more agile in the darkness, and of sharper ears; whereas he may have been the better swordsman — I never knew. So all of a sudden, and when I was pushing him very hard and heard the sounds of distress in his throat, partly, no doubt, because of his wound, I says, "Sir Ralph," says I, "this thing has gone far enough."

"Ha!" cried he, through his panting. "I have you winded, my fine fellow."

"Nay," I replied, "for my own part I am

Galloping Dick

in no hurry to quit. Yet why should we be at this labour for a man whom I do not reckon at a straw?"

"Fie, Ryder, fie!" says he, "to go back thus upon a friend!"

"Indeed," said I, "'twas no friendship but a very common vanity set me on to this; and now that I am like to worst you, I am in no mind to slay a man for the value of a humour."

"Worst me!" says he, with a touch of haughtiness; "my good man, I begin, for the first time, to think you have a fear."

But this was too much for me, and I made no more effort to reconcile him, but, on the contrary, beset him lustily. And then began the last scene in that remarkable affair. We were both spent with fatigue, but he was farther gone than myself, and, besides, had his wound. We were now, according to my guess, somewhere about the middle of the room. We directed ourselves by instinct, and 'twas no saying whether the blade would run into the air, meet steel with steel, or cut and hack upon the body. I was, myself, picked out with a

Of the Man from Cornwall

score of bloody places, and, being weak for loss of blood, was for ending the hellish business with all dispatch. And thus, with thrust and parry, aimed and taken at random, we pushed across the flagstones, he receding slowly from my reach. But presently he seemed to rally, and his blade came whizzing for my vitals. Ere the point struck I was back a foot, and lunging forward sent in my own iron upon the level from my shoulder. It lit upon his sword, and then slid up; but the blow was so hot that still the point ran on, and the next I was aware had slipped softly into something, and the hilt was fetched back in my hand with a jar. All of sudden there was a dull bang, as of a head upon the wall, and a shrill and horrible scream rang out in that black and fatal chamber. The heavy fall of a body upon the stones ensued, and my sword was jerked from my shaking hand.

“Sir Ralph,” I cried, “Sir Ralph!” in an alarm, for the shriek in a manner affected my nerves, stiff though they be with a rough life.

There was a voice calling upon me feebly, and

Gallopig Dick

suddenly all was quiet. I stooped over his body, groping for it in the dark as best I might ; and the first thing my fingers happened upon was my own sword, which, following downward, took me to his face. And at that and without further inquiry, I fetched up, with my heart in my mouth, for I knew now the meaning of that sickening scream. And there was never a sound from the dead man, but I, fingering in his breast, felt the pulse of his heart was gone.

I remember that I stood up and gazed stupidly into the black vacancy. Sir Ralph was dead as a maggot, and there was the topsman for me, and Baverstock too. This set me thinking, and presently I ran smartly into the other cell, where the fellow himself lay unconcerned in the dusk upon the boards.

“See, here,” said I, surlily enough, “it seemed that the price of your liberty is the price of a life, and as ’tis a habit of mine to pocket what I buy, come along and ask no questions ; for ’tis your head as well as mine’s in danger.”

He followed me into the inner cell, where, after a short exploration, we hit upon the little

Of the Man from Cornwall

window of which I have spoken, and which looked forth low upon a wide ditch half-full of very muddy water. There was a bar across it, which shook to the touch, and this it appeared we might remove; at least 'twas our one chance.

“Wrench!” says I to Baverstock, and we shook together.

Whether 'twas our united strength, or that the bar was insecure, and the masonry inferior, the room being long out of occupation, I know not; but the iron gave, and there was our egress ready. I squeezed through the narrow hole and dropped plump into the water, whither my companion followed; and, scrambling out upon the farther side, we came presently by devious bye-ways upon the meadows. I was in no mood for talking, as you may believe, neither by reason of my wounds, and the wetting which made them smart, nor because of the horrid affair of Sir Ralph's death. Indeed, I was more than impatient to be rid of the man that had brought me into this needless business. And so, when he turned to me in a formal

Galoping Dick

fashion, and spoke out his thanks, my temper broke.

“Sir,” says he, very stiffly, “in the name of King James III., I thank you for these services to-day. Rest assured that they shall not be forgotten when his Majesty comes to his own.”

’Twas then I turned on him savagely. “As for your King James,” says I, “or King Byblow, what the Devil is it to me? Let him go hang or go rot,” says I. “But damn my soul!” I says, “I have just let the life out of the only man I could ha’ took for friend, and all for a squinting country lout. And, damn your soul!” I says, “but I will take toll of you for the fact.”

Whereat, taking him by the throat, I made him deliver, for all his oaths and his fury. And a pretty sum I took upon that occasion, as I remember well, the which bought a box of dainty trinkets for Mrs Polly.

Of the Lady's Chamber ; of how I tres-
passed and of how I was so
oddly entertained

Chapter III

Of the Lady's Chamber ; of how I tres-
passed and of how I was so
oddly entertained

FOR the pother that fell in the "Blue Boar," I was myself much in default. I had little business, indeed, to be there at all, and specially at that time ; for the place was in ill-favour with the officers, who were used to skip in and skip out as familiar as pigeons in a dovecote. But most of all was I to blame for hobnobbing with Old Irons, as notorious for cribs as he was upon the road, through whose foul-mouthed folly by this double disadvantage the misadventure came about. I take shame on myself to have kept his company for more than the exchange of a civil greeting, for I never could away with a shabby trade like his. But the fact was I was rolling on a full tide of liquor, having that evening made Town from Winchester, with a heavy

Galloping Dick

lining to my pockets, and being buckled up, pretty lively, upon the way to Polly. 'Twas Old Irons that caught me at the "Blue Boar," where we sat cracking our bottles and gibbering away in a maudlin sort of fashion for the better side of two hours. Old Irons was fair set in wine, and must needs come at last to bragging at the pitch of his voice; swearing his was a smarter blade, and calling upon me in loud oaths to try his mettle; and then, as if this were too little, falling upon me and beslobbering me with affection, styling me his brother-in-arms, and vowing in the next breath that all upon the High Toby save himself were dirty devils, and fit for nothing but to pimp about a boiling-house. You may suppose this stuff was hardly to my taste for all the wine that I had drunk, nor was the landlord any easier, I could see, from the frightened glances he threw at us.

"Damme," says I at length, "close up, you man of mouth; or you'll find us warming the inside of the Jug."

And with that, and ere I had a notion, the trick was done, the traps were on us, and there

Of the Lady's Chamber

was the landlord, wringing his hands and crying out that ever this shame was come upon his house.

There was never a wickeder sinner than Old Irons inside Christendom, or outside for that matter, and I'd warrant his white hairs against the best of Bow Street wits. He stood astaring, and then began to cackle in a friendly, drunken way. But I waited for no more, and flinging off the paws from my shoulder, whipped out my sword, and went right through 'em. The poor cullies scattered like a crowd of sparrows, and I was forth of the door and away, with Old Irons shouting foul oaths behind, and a pack of the catchpoles on my heels. I slapped through the streets at a rare pace, for I am swift on my pegs, but the traps were no cripples neither, and kept close on my tail; and presently it came across me that if I could not make for my proper quarters, I was like this time to run myself out. And on the top of this, being now got into the rear parts of Golden Square, I found myself all on a sudden rattling up a blind alley, with one of the dogs near upon me, and nothing but a hedge of walls

Galloping Dick

upon either side. And what does I do then, but without more consideration and on the sudden suggestion, scramble into an open window of a house that overhung the alley.

I was fair mad with myself to have been put to this ignominy, and all for a beggarly crew that I could ha' driven with a bean-pole; and gently pulling to the casement, I cursed Old Irons for a daft, racket-pated old scoundrel. But just then there was an interruption on my thoughts in a little frightened cry that came from the interior of the room. This made me turn, for the Lord knew into what further mischief I had fallen. The room was in darkness save for one feeble light that was in the back part. And here, to my exceeding surprise, I perceived that I was come into a bed-chamber. But no sooner were my eyes on the bed itself and the disarray of the coverlets, than they fell next upon a second discovery, still more deranging. For there, cowering in a corner and wrapped in an elegant sort of nightrail, was a young miss, hiding her face, and all ashiver from terror. This took me off

Of the Lady's Chamber

my fury forthright, for I was not the man to scarify a woman so, save now and then in the common course of business. Moreover, I was also at the moment mightily disconcerted myself with the traps outside, and so without more ado I stepped further into the room, and, "Madam," says I, very courteously, "I would ask your pardon upon this trespass, but I am in a sweat for liberty, and I will swear but I mean no harm by you."

"Who are you?" she asked in a trembling voice, and getting the clothes about her more warmly.

"Why," says I promptly, blowing away like a grampus, "I am a poor rebel against His Majesty, who is like to be taken and done for at the hands of an accursed Law."

"You will be killed?" she said.

I nodded. "Dead as mutton," I answered.

"Upon the scaffold?" she whispers, looking very startled.

"You may call it that," says I.

"Oh!" she cries, drawing in her breath and regarding me very pitifully.

Galloping Dick

“Come, now,” said I, finding there was little time to be exchanged upon these ceremonies, with the mongrels baying below. “Come, now, there is no manner of hurt in an honest rebel against his King, and if you will but serve me by a generous silence, I will e’en pick my way forth of your house by the proper gates, as comfortable as a footboy.”

There came some voices at that instant from without in the alley, whereat she gave a gasp.

“Oh! they must not take you,” she said eagerly. “You must be hid.”

“Faith,” I replied, “I do not ask a privilege so far, but if I may have the space of your walls for passage I will make my own meat at the end, if needs be.”

“No, no!” she said, seeming bewildered, “they will be clamouring at the door.”

Now this was likely enough, as I guessed, but what course else was before me, with none but a girl’s petticoats ’twixt me and Newgate, I was at a loss to conceive; and as for that, there was not even petticoats, as it seemed, in the case.

Of the Lady's Chamber

“Well, what am I to do?” says I, laughing.

“I will help you,” says she quickly: “I am thinking.”

Now this piece of consideration in a young miss that might well have run out of her senses on my appearance, and screamed down the house on me, gave me a mighty tender feeling; but I said nothing at the moment, seeing she was involved in thought.

Then: “You will see, sir,” she began in a timid way, “that I am in a case of some embarrassment——”

“Gad!” said I, interrupting, for I could see the confusion of her face, and I had clean forgot she was so bare, “I disremembered you wore no clothes. I will go,” I says.

“No, no!” she protested, making a sudden step out of her corner as though to stop me. “But——” and here again she fell ashamed and was covered with blushes. As yet I had seen little of the girl's viznomy, she being obscured in the shadows, but at this forward motion the light was flung upon her, and I vow she was a pretty wench enough. I should

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not ha' minded to buss her there and then, but seeing she was in such a taking, and had used me so kindly, I made shift to ease her delicacy.

“Hark'ee, miss,” says I, “I will secure myself within the further room there, and you shall clap the doors upon me as tight as you will.”

But: “No!” says she again, and in a hasty manner: “’Tis my sister-in-law’s room,” says she.

“Faith!” said I, laughing, “I am come into a regular plague of sleeping chambers. But if I must needs, then, keep the room, sink me! but we will have the light out, young madam.”

And then: “No,” again says she, looking at me rather frightened.

“Oh, well,” says I in some impatience, “if you will not trust me so far, in God’s name do not trust me at all; and I will take my way out of the window again, with thanks.”

“Nay, nay!” she said, for that touched her heart. “But I will trust you, sir. If you will

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but turn your back upon me, in sooth, I shall be ready ere you may count fifty."

"And so be it, and the Lord bless your pretty face," said I, tickled with the child. Whereat I whisked about and stared out of the window into the night; and then for a humorous whim, I fell on counting the figures aloud, and as I did so, could hear behind me the noise as of a mouse rustling among garments. But presently, peering forth of the casement, I thought I discerned a man upon the further side of the alley, watching me, and with that I dropped quiet and drew back a bit. And thus it was that falling into oblivion of my delicate position, and the bargain with Miss, I was suddenly startled by the opening of a door behind me, and a new voice upon the silence; and jumping round I put my hand to my sword.

It was ill-done, being against my compact, but I had the excuse of my hazard, and I think she did not remember it against me in the odd event that succeeded. For there was my Miss, half-dressed, and showing the white round of

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her shoulders, fallen back upon the bed with a very pale face; while over against the doorway was the newcomer, who first started herself, then stared, and finally broke into a rippling fit of laughter, which was very merry to hear.

“Fie! fie!” says she, “and you so young and milk-faced, sister. O you baggage!” says she, laughing.

Miss was now all ablush from being white, and seemed mightily confused; but seeing how the matter stood I stepped up myself, and says I bluntly, “I’ll swear, madam,” says I, “that she’s a vestal for me.”

“O Gad!” she cries, laughing louder, “you kill me, sure. I warrant you make my ribs ache. Nay, good sir, pray protest away. Lard, I like you for it. ’Sbud, but ’tis an easy costume, and I have tried it myself.”

But there Miss gets upon her legs again, with her rail clutched to her throat, and, “You mistake,” she says in a low tone, and all confusion, “I—this gentleman——”

“Slidikins, you chuck, don’t deny it,” cries t’other. “Faith, I would not go back upon

Of the Lady's Chamber

an honest *amour* for all the jewels of London. Oh, what a sly hussy; and you all fresh from the country!"

This was gone too far for me, seeing Miss there so embarrassed with her colour, and so I spoke out very civil and very plain.

"Indeed, madam," said I, "you do us injustice in your suspicion, me in my presumption, and the lady in her modesty. I'll dare swear, if she have a lover, 'tis not I."

Once more she went off laughing. "You ply a brave tongue," she says. "How it wags about! Well, what is't? Lard, give me a pretty lie, and I'll forgive you."

"This gentleman is a rebel," says Miss eagerly.

"A rebel!" cried she sharply, and looks me up and down.

"And being beset of the King's officers has took refuge here by an inadvertence," I put in, bowing.

She surveyed me with deliberation, and then smiled. "Foy!" she said, "'tis a likely sort of rebel. And you would make my house your

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covert. Why, the times is topsy-turvy when we have rebels in a bed-chamber. Well, Mr Rebel," she said, "sure, you have a fine way with you. And a good tall fellow for the crows!" and she looked at me again. But meeting her eyes, somehow, for the life of me I could not refrain from going off into laughter on the same instant as herself. After which she gave me a roguish glance, and "So," said she, "you have brought the law to besiege my doors. Well?"

I put my hand to my heart. "Madam," said I, "I have of an accident put Miss here to the blush, and you to trouble. I think shame on myself, but 'twas not of purpose or proposal; and if you will allow me I will here take my leave."

"Lard!" she cries, making an eye at me, "you are in haste to be quit of us. Sure, since you please Cynthia, we must do our best for you," and then, tapping Miss upon the cheek, "Fie, sis!" she says, laughing, "you have excellent taste, you gixie, you. I shall yet make a woman of you."

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But Miss drew back with a gesture, and looking all pink and warm like a peony-flower. "Oh, your ladyship is cruel," she broke out with tears, "you deride me and you shame me." T'other did nothing but giggle, being now taken in a further fit, and there was me standing stupidly, hat in hand, minding nothing to say, and vexed out of patience with this silly clutter. And in truth what would have come of it all I cannot say, but at that juncture a great rapping upon the outer doors sounded through the house.

"They are here," cried Miss suddenly, started out of her tears. "Oh, sister."

"Foh!" says her ladyship, "and indeed they may knock at my doors."

"You must open to them, madam," said I, "they are on the King's warrant."

She stamped her foot, and looked imperious; then frowning, encountered my gaze dubiously. "You think 'tis necessary?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Madam," I says, "I am mad to be overmuch in your way, and I crave your pardon. Let me remove——"

Galloping Dick

“O foh!” cried she lightly, “an’ if we must, well we must. His Majesty has no manners. I’ll warrant we find a way to pass you off. ’Tis a pity to peril the blood of so handsome a rogue.”

“He must be hid,” cries Miss.

“Nay,” said I, “I will serve myself best at large, and not pent within some closet, where a man’s iron were as much use as a toothpick.”

Her ladyship looks at me. “Sure, we’ll swear to you,” she says boldly.

“Well,” says I slyly, “an’ I might without undue trespass be established for Mrs Cynthia’s brother, why——”

“Yes, yes,” said the girl eagerly.

Her ladyship looked at me, and next at Miss, and her eyebrows fell an instant. But she said nothing, until presently,

“’Sbud,” she cried, clapping her hands, “I have it, sure. Lard, yes, you shall be sis’s brother and my husband. Gemini! But I have been long without a bed-fellow.”

She held me with her roguish eyes, and looked so damned taking that I was sore put

Of the Lady's Chamber

to it not to throw my arms about her on the spot and take the privilege she proffered with such a gust. But instead, "Faith," said I promptly, "but the character will fit me with all my heart; and a handsomer wife 'twere hard to find the length of Town," says I.

"Why, for that matter, and the husband, too, is uncommon," she retorted, smiling at me roundly.

There was that in her eyes that drew me, and in a manner they seemed to communicate with me. But that passed on the instant, and she was laughing lightly the next second.

"Lard!" she cried, "'tis a pretty plot. O my Sol!" and turns to her sister. "Sis, sis, I'll warrant to save him, the pretty rogue. He is no lover of thine, child, but mine own unlawful husband. Fie, what is come to your cheeks, you jealous minx?" and pushed her with a laughing contempt.

But Miss was looking askew, though I had no eyes for her at the time; and then again the noise of the traps was repeated, and there was the sound of footsteps in the house.

Galloping Dick

“Go, go,” says Mrs Cynthia.

“Yes, go,” says her ladyship, taking me by the arm and pushing me to the door. “An’ you be my husband, ’tis in my chamber you must stay, not Cynthia’s.” And laughing she put me forth and pulled the door upon me.

Now, I was in no mind to be there in the dark for long, being indeed much taken now with the adventure, which promised better than I had dared imagine. And, moreover, I was anxious to witness the end myself, whatever it might be; and so in a very few minutes, and when, after a little, the sound of their chatter was gone, I opened the door and, creeping out upon the stairway, made for the next floor. Here a noise of voices attracted me to an oaken door, which shoving back, I came into a very spacious chamber, lit up as for the reception of guests. Here was several people in brisk conversation, and my two ladies among ’em, the one of which, she that was to husband me, was calling in a high voice.

“A highwayman!” she cries. “Lard,

Of the Lady's Chamber

gentlemen, and in my house! Oh, and us with all our jewels!"

And it was upon the echo of this that I entered and came plump upon the company. There was three of the traps, and they all turned sharp at my footsteps.

"What is this fuss?" says I, in a fine tall voice, and regarding them all with indignation.

"Why, here is our man," cried one of the traps, a tall lout of a fellow, Wilkins by name, as I knew very well by sight; and thereupon two of them, running up, set their hands on me.

"Oons!" cried I furiously, sending them sprawling. "What the devil! You unmannerly scum!"

"'Tis the man himself, your ladyship," said Wilkins, and then; "Richard Ryder," said he, "I arrest you in the King's name."

"God a mercy," broke out her ladyship; "Sir Paul, what is this comedy?"

"Sir Paul!" cries Wilkins in an amaze.

"'Tis my husband, sirrah," says her ladyship haughtily. "Sir Paul Fulton of the

Galloping Dick

Firs, and *Custos Rotulorum* for the county of Somerset.”

There was never a fellow taken so aback as this Wilkins. He scratched his rough head, and looked very puzzled, “But, your ladyship——” he says, and then stops and rubs his nose. “’Tis the very moral of the man,” he mutters.

“Odzooks!” I said, coming forward and keeping up my voice very stiff with the best of the quality. “You sottish tenterhook! What, would you lay hands upon a justice? And upon what pretence, you hobnailed rogue?”

“I beg your pardon,” he stammered, “I ——”; and then whispered to his men. I saw them nod their heads, and they talked together with some show of excitement. Then again Wilkins turned to me and “I am sorry,” said he gruffly, “but you must come with me, for it must be proven of the justices whether you be what you claim to be.”

“Why!” I cried, breaking towards him.

Of the Lady's Chamber

“Damn you, you muckworm, you rascal—you ——” And taking the flat of my sword I was there and then for laying 'em all to the floor and shovelling 'em into the street. But at that her ladyship, who had been feigning a rare flutter, now stepped in, putting up a pretty arm afore me.

“Stay, Sir Paul,” says she, and then very imperiously to Wilkins, “You have dared doubt a gentleman's own word of what he is, and the word of his wife, that he is her husband. Well, as you be King's officers, you shall have witness, as is in your right to ask. Cynthia!” she calls, and Miss comes up, looking very white and frightened. “Who is this?” says she, pointing at me.

“Sir Paul Fulton,” says the girl with a little hesitation.

“And my husband?” says her ladyship sharply.

“Yes,” says Miss in a low voice.

Her ladyship faces the traps. “Well?” she says.

Wilkins looked all confused; and at this

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point the door creaked and opened, and there came in softly a little old gentleman, dressed up very precious, and bedizened with fopperies.

Here, I must own, my heart was in my mouth upon this apparition, for we were like to have the tables turned upon our pretty plot, whoever the Devil he was. But her ladyship was never a whit dismayed.

“Ah!” she said joyously, running up to him, “you are come in the nick of time, Sir Charles. What think you? These rogues will make out that Sir Paul here is no husband of mine but a villain of a highwayman or some low fellow. Tell ’em, Sir Charles, tell ’em,” she says, clinging to him, “tell ’em to their faces. Is not this gentleman here Sir Paul, my husband, with whom I have gone to bed these five years?”

If Wilkins was took aback before, the little old gentleman was in even greater disconcert now. He dropped his cane, and next his snuffbox: then he started panting and wheezing, and his eyes bulged out of his sockets; and he grew a kind of purple. Faith, he went

Of the Lady's Chamber

through more changes of embarrassment than I could reckon upon paper.

"Prythee, get your breath, Sir Charles," cried her ladyship, appealingly, "an' your chest be so bad again. But tell 'em, tell 'em. Lord! I shall die of this insolence."

And then at last the old creature, getting his wind, says, stammering, "Odds," he says, "yes, your ladyship, Sir Paul, for sure."

"And is't not my husband?" she says entreating.

"Gadsbobs, of course," he stutters, "your husband."

"Swear it to them," she urges piteously, and as one all in a tremble.

"I'll swear it," says he in a fluster.

Her ladyship whipped round upon the traps in a splendid bearing, and regarded them haughtily. But that was enough for Wilkins. He hung his head abashed, and made some sort of amends in a sulky, terrified way. But I paid him no heed, not so much as if he was dirt, and the three fellows slunk out of the room, with their tails curled under 'em, I assure

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you. But it was not upon them I bent my attention; 'twas the little old gentleman as tickled me. For there he was fallen, limp, into a chair, snorting like a pig and mopping of his face, staring the while first at me and then at her ladyship, and sometimes in a bewildered way at Mrs Cynthia. Then, when the door had banged upon the fellows, her ladyship burst out a-laughing.

“Lard, Lard!” she cries, “Sure, I shall die of it all,” and tapping me on the shoulder, “My poor Ryder,” she says, “an’ that be what they call you, you have a taking presence and a rare possession. ’Sbud, but you make a handsome husband, and I an admirable wife to you.”

“Indeed, your ladyship,” I said, “I am sorely beholden to you; and a more elegant display of terrors I ha’n’t seen not upon any stage of Town.”

And then the old boy thrust in, getting his voice once more. “O my lady,” he says, “O my dearest charmer, what does this signify? Odds, but I am all amiss; and who is this fellow?”

Of the Lady's Chamber

"Fellow," says she, drawing herself up with an air of great magnificence. "Faith, Sir Charles, I will have you to speak civilly of my husband, as you yourself have borne witness."

That put him further about, with the colour running in his funny old face. "Odds, my dear," he cried in a wheedling voice, "what spirit of devilry is here? What is this tantrum, ninnykins?"

"Devilry!" says she, "ninnykins! Sure, an' I was Sir Paul, 'twould not be I that would stand by to hear these terms put upon his wife."

Now I had no knowledge of what there might be between 'em, save that they seemed upon a certain intimacy, and for all that I knew this might ha' been the real bed-fellow. Seeing her kindness for me, therefore, I was not for making trouble between 'em, and I came forward with my best manner.

"Hark'ee, Sir Charles," I says bluntly, "what has fallen 'twixt me and her ladyship is not for your interference, whoever you may be. But, an' you fuss yourself into a heat about it, and maybe with private grounds of your own, under-

Galloping Dick

stand that if a lady shall do a poor gentleman a great service, 'tis to the credit of her heart, as should be acknowledged the first by one of your years."

But upon this he rose in his chair, spluttering. "My years!" he squeaked. "Odds! my years! I was born in the year of his gracious Majesty's Restauration, and there's midwives to prove it. Oons!"

"Well," said I, "best hold your temper, for even by that you are old enough to have better manners than to fly out among ladies."

He fell back, gaping at me, and quite speechless, for he must ha' been sixty if he was one; and her ladyship good-humorously interposed.

"Come," she says, "Lard! How you would quarrel upon me! But, 'slife, I have a mind to sup. Sir Charles, cease your dudgeon, and come to supper, you and Sir Paul there."

The Lord knows I was willing enough, and so, apparently, was Sir Charles, for without more words he scrambled upon his thin shanks and made hastily for the banquet room, where an elegant treat was laid out and furnished for

Of the Lady's Chamber

us. And he was no sooner set at the board than he recovered his wits and made play with the victuals with a good spirit. As for me, Lord! I keep still the remembrance of the company, and the viands, very lively. Her ladyship was pleased to sit next me, and all the time was chattering like a nest of magpies, laughing and jesting and plying me with her eyes in a way that warmed me even more than the wine. Miss sat t'other side, seeming rather demure, and the little old gentleman divided himself between gulping down his food and ogling at her ladyship. I was hollow in the midriff myself, and there were good things enough about us, and so I was pretty comfortable at the first. But after a little, and when we were well on in wine, it suited her ladyship to give a turn to her tongue that was not to my liking. 'Twas that damned Wilkins as had put it in her head, and the more she pursued me the shriller the old scarecrow opposite screamed out his hee-hee-hee, and cackled like a parrot. Now, for all my experience of women, and I have encountered them of all qualities, I am

Gallopig Dick

better with 'em upon the road, or elsewhere, than thus, in a kind of obligation, and as it were under a bond of gratitude. And what made it worse, was that it had been no manners to fume and grow surly. But, in truth, she put me out.

For says she, archly, "O my dear Ryder, and ha' you killed many in your business?" and when Miss leaned over with her ears open, "Faith, sis, I'll swear 'tis a very wicked fellow."

"Why, no," says I foolishly, "no more than my share."

"Ah, but," says she, "I know you gentlemen. O you rogue!" And ere I could prick up my wits to retort on her, she gave a little scream, and putting her hands to her face, "O Captain Ryder," she says, feigning to implore me, "an' we meet, you will spare my jewels? 'Slidikins, my dear Ryder, promise me that."

This set me shifting in my seat, but I was at a loss for words; and then she flew off again in her light-headed fashion. "Captain

Of the Lady's Chamber

dear," she says eagerly, "odds me, but you shall learn me the trade. Faith, and I'll learn it; indeed, sis, and I will."

'Twas not that I minded the knowledge of my calling, for I never have blushed for that; but to be made a mock of before an old Mawkin, and with Mrs Cynthia's face of wonderment opposing me, was a sorry trial for my temper. But I was not to be drawn out, and I passed it off pretty well, for I says, "Faith, your ladyship," I says a little roughly, but smiling, "I will teach you anything in the world, and Miss here, and the rather that I'll warrant with two pretty faces and no ugly dowdies we should not want for decoys."

At that she laughed (but Miss turned red) and, clapping her hands, filled me out more wine.

"What an admirable husband I have gotten, for sure!" she cries to Sir Charles, who was hee-heeing in his silly fashion.

"And," says I, thinking to mark a score upon him, if I might not upon her, "If you and me

Galloping Dick

should meet with some such rolling old rogue, as Sir Charles there, in the hiccups, why I warrant we should set ourselves up for life."

Sir Charles stuttered, being indeed in the hiccups himself, as I saw, but her ladyship laughed louder, and being now gotten to her fourth glass, put her hand on mine.

"Lard," says she, "an' we be not already wed, which I have forgot, we'll make a match of it, Ryder."

I was fairly mellow myself by then, and I answered smart enough. "If your ladyship will," says I cheerfully, "faith I'm for the noose to-morrow."

Old Mawkin gave a little snarling laugh.

"I wonder at you," he squeaked, "to hear you talk so boldly of nooses."

"'Slife," said her ladyship sharply, "and why should he not? Mercy! may not my husband-to-be converse of what he will in the house that shall be his?"

"Oons, what mean you?" asked Mawkin, with a hiccup, "a jest is a jest," he says.

"And a sot is a sot," she retorted quickly.

Of the Lady's Chamber

“But an' you keep your wits from the orgy, you may dance me to church to-morrow;” and she sent me such a languishing look as thrilled me to the reins.

“By God, that is so,” I said, all afire; and then she laid her hand in mine, and the impulse coming over me sudden, I drew her over with a movement, and kissed her loudly.

“O, you villain, you,” said her ladyship, but she laughed softly and held my hand still. But Sir Charles was gotten upon his legs, all yellow and purple, and his nose gleaming above the rest of his face; while Miss was all of a-tremble.”

“Sis,” she cried, “Sis, shame on you! You would take this jest too far.”

Her ladyship only laughed; and then old Mawkin stamps to the door, shaking his fist, and “You—you are a wanton—” he hiccuped, “odds—you—you——” and out he scrambles without finishing, and with our laughter after him. Then there was a moment's pause, after which Miss turns and addresses me.

“I know not who you be, sir, nor what be

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your business. That is between you and your conscience. But as you lay a claim to be a gentleman, you will see 'tis a late hour and the time for your leaving."

For the life of me I could not say how it took me so, for I was never less in the mind to go; but there was that in her bearing and still more in her eyes that sobered me very swiftly; and all of a sudden I recalled that 'twas she that had befriended me in the first. With which I stood slowly on my feet, and "'Tis true," says I roughly, but with an air of decision, "I had forgot the hours, and needs but I must be packing after Sir Charles. But if 'tis in my hand," said I, looking at both of 'em studiously, "to return this pleasant entertainment one day, why here's my word for to command me."

"Fie! Cynthia," puts in her ladyship sharply, "you jealous malapert. Out, you shameless baggage, that would rob me of a husband!"

Miss shrank away, very still and white, and her ladyship turns to me, smiling. "What!" she cried, "you would take fright at this chitty-

Of the Lady's Chamber

face? Foh! and I shall be jealous myself. But Lard, yes," she says, simpering, "the child is right. My reputation is to lose. You must not pepper that with spots. O Lard, no. But if not to-night it shall be to-morrow, an' it fit. Foh! yes."

I looked at her a moment, and her tumultuous eyes, and then, "Sink me," I cried, "to-morrow it shall be."

I scarce know how I came out of the house and was got to bed, but the next morning I was up betimes and engaged with the affairs of the night. You must fancy that here was an odd predicament in the which to find myself. For the lady herself, I had scarce a doubt but she had settled a kind of affection upon me, and indeed I was no gallows-bird for looks, though the women were ever the worst element in my fortunes. But what set me pondering was this: that the bargain was composed deep in wine, and that whereas I was now considering of my position, her slugabed ladyship too might be biting her fingers at me and laughing all over. For the marriage itself, no doubt I had a mind

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to it; for 'twas a rare chance fallen in my way, such as we devil-may-care gentry would accept singing. I would ha' leapt to gather the fruits of our relations, with her a widow, as I conceived, and guineas chinking in from many a broad acre. And if it came to that, I had a fancy for her, for she was a woman of mark, with the brand of her beauty as thick on her as her powder. Not but what Polly Scarlett had a neater turn to her shoulders, and a smarter leg to her kirtle. For the matter of that neither was as good as Miss's for I had seen both of hers pretty plain. Yet her ladyship had an air of gaiety, as it might be, which reminded me of Mrs Polly, and I'll dare swear, save for the other considerations, there was little to pick between 'em. Still, the adventure, upon my reflections, came out thus: that I would be married an' she would have it, and be damned to Sir Charles and sis also. And having gotten these convictions, what does I do, but, like a fool, gets on Calypso, and rides off to a mews near by; whence, striking into the square, I stopped before her ladyship's door.

Of the Lady's Chamber

When I was come inside, after a parley with the footboy, I found her ladyship stretched upon a couch and seeming very weary and lackadaisical.

“O Lord,” says she, “’tis my old friend, Ryder. Sure, captain, you are come to make me merry of your wits, for I be sad enough.” And that was true, for she was pale, as I might discern beneath her colours. I was come in a very high spirit, and as elegant, I’ll warrant, as Sir Charles himself, saving for the gewgaws about him, and for all that she was so melancholical I was not to be stayed and started off very sprightly.

“O Lard, Ryder,” says she, “how you run on! And what is the news of Town?”

“Why,” said I, “there is nothing about the streets, your ladyship, save the runners, and that Sir Charles is fallen into a chagrin.”

She laughed soundly at that, and “O you rogue,” she says.

“And,” I went on, “beside that there is no news save the news that I love you, and that news is old news since last night.”

Galloping Dick

“What a lover you make!” she cried, very well pleased, as I could see.

“Nay, rather,” says I, “what a husband!”

“Husband!” says she, with a yawn, “Troth, ’tis a silly word.”

“’Twas you as spoke it last night,” said I bluntly.

“O foh!” says she, “you have a most distressing memory, Ryder.”

But I was not to be put off like that, and, having now the fit upon me, I plunged pretty deep into my affections. I wager I gave her as good a story as any of the water-blooded ninnies of the Town, and I vow, too, that she took it with a rare relish. For she seemed vastly delighted, and she says, sighing, “How you woo, Ryder!” she says. O my poor Ryder, how you must ha’ suffered! Lord, you would believe I was a chit in my teens, like sis, there.”

“As for teens,” says I, “you and me are gotten beyond. I would not have a slip like that for a king’s ransom. Give me a fine stark woman with two valiant and artful eyes in her.”

Of the Lady's Chamber

“O fie,” she said, feigning to cover her face, “you are a most instant villain. How you press me! And, I warrant, you ha’ loved scores.”

“One may dabble in the sex,” I said, “but I have had a passion for none save your ladyship. And I have seen hundreds, but never one to match the turn of your shoulders.”

“I have pretty shoulders,” says she, glancing down at ’em: and she stretched herself upon the couch so as her ankles showed beneath the borders of her petticoats.

“Aye,” said I, “and more!”

“O foh,” she says, but her eyes sparkling, “there be plenty in the Town with better points upon ’em.”

“Indeed, and there’s not,” says I, “as I will prove upon the body of any Huff in London, if he have the ill taste.” She gave me a look out of her eyes, the which set me off in a whirl. “Come,” says I suddenly, “what’s amiss that we should not fetch the parson?”

“O Lard,” she sighed and simpered, “what would the wits of Town say? They would rhyme me out of my life.”

Galloping Dick

“And I,” I said, “would bleed ’em out of theirs.”

“What a tongue you wag, for sure,” said she archly. “I fear, Ryder, you would take me by storm.”

“I would take you, an’ the parson had hummed upon us,” says I.

“How you clatter about this parson!” says she querulously. “There’s better things than church and parson.”

“Why, as for them,” I said, “maybe I do not reckon so much upon them myself.”

“Well?” says she smiling, holding me and as it were inviting me with her eyes. What was for coming I know not, for my head was dizzy, but just then enters, pat upon us, that nidgett, Sir Charles, tripping over his toasting-iron as he comes in.

“What! is’t you, Sir Charles?” cries her ladyship, while I stood frowning at this spoilsport, and he staring at me. Then, “But you know my dear Ryder,” says she gaily. “Faith, you interrupt us in our bridal rehearsal.”

The Mawkin stared at me, blinking his eyes,

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and then with a snort turned short away and marched up to her ladyship. I was sufficiently put about as it was, and was in no temper to stand this; so making a stride after him, I took him by the collar and wheeled him round.

"Sir!" said I tartly, "you have been introduced to a gentleman, and for a gentleman to scowl upon a gentleman in any case is not after my notion of civility. So that's for you," I says.

"Odds!" he cried with his squeak, and lugging at his sword, while the red nose on him stood out more like a door-knob than ever.

"Leave that skewer alone," says I sharply, "or must I learn you that 'tis not for a gentleman to draw in the presence of a lady?"

But as he still struggled with his hilt, and stammered and spluttered, as it might be in a fit, I took him by the nape of the neck and shoved him towards the door.

"Odds!" he says. "Bobs!" he says. "Oons!" says this Mawkin, "you shall repent this." But I ran him to the door and filluped him out into the hall, and then, re-

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turning, found her ladyship fair rolling on the couch with laughter.

“O Ryder, dear!” she cried, “you are an uncommon entertainment. Faith, you capture my heart.”

But here again there was an interposition upon us; for Miss came hastily into the room with a *billet* for her ladyship.

“O Gemini!” cries her ladyship. “Foh, what is this? You interrupt us. I want not your bills. Lord, you should ha’ seen my Sir Paul with Sir Charles here. Troth, there’s comedy left in life.” And with that her eyes fell upon the superscription of the letter, and she gave a start, and sat up quickly.

But while I was wondering what this might mean, for I saw that she was flustered, Miss came up, and “May I have a word with you, sir?” she said in a low voice.

“Certainly,” said I, “and a thousand for such a pretty face.”

Her lip curled a little, but she made no reply to that, beginning in quite another vein.

“Sir,” she said, “I know not who or what

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you be, nor whether you be rebel or highway-man; but 'tis best that you should leave this house."

"What!" said I, "and her ladyship there who is to wed with me?"

She turned her head sharply from me, but then, coming back again, made as if to speak once more; but at this point her ladyship broke in.

"O Lord, sis," she cried, "give me joy. Faith, and you must guess. Who is't, d'ye suppose, save the faithless Malvern, the dear rogue!"

"Why, what is this?" I asked, for there was that about her show of excitement that made me wonder. But she took no heed of me, and went on crying out in terms of unaccustomed gladness about this "devoted wretch," and this "dear villain," and declared that her hair was all awry, and that she would never be fit more to receive a chairman.

I was not to pass all this in silence, as you may imagine, and so I broke in sharply: "Your ladyship——" said I; but ere I could get two

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words out of my mouth, she waved me away with a gesture of impatience.

“Lard, Ryder, d’ye see that I am busy? I have enough to do but to mind your tantrums;” and fell to re-reading of her letter with every demonstration of delight.

And while I stood there for the moment, mortified and dubitative, I heard Miss’s voice again in my ears. “Sir,” she says, “and indeed ’tis urgent that you go?”

“Why——” I cried, turning on her in vexation; but then something in her viznomy stopped me. “Well, what is it?” I asked.

“Whatever you be,” she says, “you have enemies, who will be brought upon you very soon. And you had best escape while there is time.”

“Oh!” said I, for now I understood. “You mean old Mawkin? ’Tis a treacherous old hunks, and I will prick him into a few holes with his own bodkin.”

“I name no names,” she says quickly, “but you will go?” she urged.

“Damme, no,” says I, being now angered at

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this general opposition; "but I will have it out with her ladyship first, and Hunks too." I stepped up to her, for the tables were like to be turned upon me all on a sudden. "Your ladyship," says I, "you ha' treated me ill."

"O Lard, Ryder," she cried, stamping her foot with impatience. "Don't ye hear sis? Get ye back to your highways ere justice overtakes ye."

Now this was spoken very brutally, and for all that she had done for me I had not merited a jibe like this at her hands. My blood was up, and I answered very plain.

"Hark'ee, your ladyship," said I, "I know when a face is welcome. But that's not to the point," says I; "for I cannot abide your high-mannered whimsies, and I am no petty varlet to be plucked and tossed aside for sport. Why, says you, 'We will go to church.' 'Certainly,' says I, seeing your ladyship's girdle clips the rarest piece—and a pair of eyes! 'To-morrow,' says you, 'To-morrow for me,' says I. And, faith, when it comes to the act, there's no more than a footboy's discharge, or as

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much ceremony as you would waste upon your maid."

At that she looked up from her reading for the first time, and laughed at me. "My poor Ryder," she says, "you ha' been my husband for a day, and I am not used to keep 'em longer. Thank God that I didn't divorce ye sooner."

"Go, sir!" pleaded Miss, at my ears; and she was right enough, for there was the traps at the door, as I could hear.

"Yes, go, my highwayman," says t'other, indifferently.

"Well," says I grimly, "an' I be a highwayman, the which I will not deny, damme, I will not go empty-handed. One or t'other," says I, looking at 'em, "make your choice, or I'll have both."

Her ladyship laughed, and Miss turned red. "O, you may have sis," says her ladyship. "Only leave me my jewels."

This nettled me further. "Damn your jewels," I says, "I'll have someone forth along of me, sink me if I don't."

'Twas then that the door opened, and I

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turned, thinking the traps were right upon me, but 'twas only Mawkin, rubbing his fingers and humming to himself, very much pleased.

“Take Sir Charles,” says her ladyship lightly.

And somehow all of a sudden the humour took me, for I am a man of odd impulses; and, moreover, I recalled that all this had fallen out by reason of his treachery. I slapped my leg.

“By Gad!” I says, “and so I will.”

Mrs Cynthia cried out aloud, and her ladyship laughed, and old Mawkin struggled; but I took him by the small of his back, and flinging him over my arm, made for the door.

“They will take you,” cried Miss, “they will take you.”

“By the way I came in,” I says, “by that way I go forth, and a pest upon all petticoats!”

“Don't ye stay in sis's chamber,” cries out her ladyship, screaming with laughter.

But I was out of the room and up the stairway, ere I could hear more. I pulled old Mawkin through the window for all his gambadoes, caught up Calypso (and my boots) at the mews, and was out and away upon the

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turnpike to Uxbridge, ere ever a jannizary was in sight. And 'twas not till I was come under Tyburn Tree that I dropped him off the saddle, whence he fell with a splash into some muddy pool that the stream makes there. But as for me, I galloped on, feeling, as you may suppose, mightily out of appetite with women.

Of the Enterprize of the King's Treasure

Chapter IV

Of the Enterprize of the King's Treasure

'TWAS the narrowness of my fortunes, as much as my own giddy head, that leagued me in the business of the King's Treasure. I have always borne a brain; there was never an adventure to my fist but I measured out its chances; and sometimes 'twas taken, though against all odds, and other times 'twas left for a piece of foolhardiness. It was along of my mood. For the matter of that, we gentlemen of the road live no feather-bed lives, and it is our trade to forestall the assaults of Death. But this affair went against not only my judgment but my will; and I make no doubt that I would not ha' taken up with it, had it not been that my pockets were bare, and my head was singing with wine. Altogether, at the moment, I conceive that the world and I were on pretty

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lively terms. But 'twas the leanness of my purse as drew me on. "Split me," says I to Danny, throwing a crown at him, "and here's my last coin upon it;" and there upon the spot the bargain was struck. But the next day I was out of temper with myself. 'Twas not the greatness of the peril that put me off, for I have never been stopped by a bloody point in all my days; but the truth was, there was never a rascal of the whole pack of our fellowship that I would care to join hands with on an emprise of the kind. I was not for couples myself: I kept myself aloof; and Old Irons and I wore the best reputations upon the road, but in very different ways, as you may fancy. Old Irons was as black a rogue as you may conjecture, being bred up from a lad for cutpurse and wheedler, and entertaining any business as would fetch him in a guinea to break a bottle on. Out of his drink he was as cunning as he was ferocious, but in wine you would not match his bravadoes out of Hell. And, by a curious chance, it was this very man that directed me to the folly of the adventure.

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'Twas Creech as had the information to start with, and took it from no less a person than Timothy Grubbe himself. "Ay, there you are," says Old Irons to me, "and who d'ye suppose is blind cuckoo enough for to walk into Timothy's net? Why, you, Dick Ryder," says he, "you and a buffle-head like Creech there."

"As for that," I said, for I was nettled at his sneering, "I can see a point or two beyond Timothy Grubbe's back, and without ever a wink from you."

"Rip me," says he, starting up, "d'ye think I could not ha' been in the job myself? And I suppose 'twas not Timothy as came wheedling of me with his rat's eyes, and clapping me on the back for a lord, and thrusting forth his tongue upon the sight of guineas that a man of heart might take in a night an' he used his weapons briskly. Bah!" says Old Irons, "I trust no thief-catcher, nor no go-between, not till I pull my locks at the topsman."

And this was true enough about Timothy Grubbe, as every man of us knew very well. There was many that owed the Jug and the

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Tree to that mealy-mouthed scoundrel, with his pink eyes and his greasy grin. If ever the Devil came to London Town, it was with Timothy's hide he covered himself. For it was his aim to stand in security somewhere half-way 'twixt us fellows and the Law, and squeeze the both; and but that he had the lives of scores upon his tongue, and was very useful withal at a pinch, both to us on the lay and to the traps, he would have been hanged or pistolled for his pains long since. But, Devil or none, Timothy Grubbe was not a name to frighten me, nor was I to be lectured by a sot like Old Irons. And so I told him roundly; and then while we were drinking at the "Bull's Head," who should come up but the man himself.

He stepped forward to us smartly, as though we were the particular game he was after, and, "Ho! Ho! Dick Ryder," says he, with that intolerable grin of his, "and there's sport ahead, is there, Dick? Pretty goldfinches to nest in your pockets, eh? So, so, Dick; and you look full-mettled for business. What?"

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And he stood there wagging the head upon his wry neck, as though he had fallen from the topsman's cart a while too soon.

Old Irons said nothing, for he was mighty quiet when Timothy Grubbe was about; but I would not keep silence before a half-hanged, mal-faced mongrel like him.

“And who are you, Timothy Grubbe,” said I, “to come athrusting in your nose atween two gentlemen at supper? Does His Majesty give you that right along of the privilege to clap poor cullies in the Jug?”

He grinned worse than ever, nodding his twisted head, but shot me an evil look out of his narrow eyes.

“Ah, here's a wit,” says he. “Here's a wit as the ladies of the Court have lost. A fine young gentleman, Captain Irons, and a fine clean job he made nigh Petersfield last week; and a fine entertainment, too, he will make some day upon Tyburn Tree, with the Ordinary apraying over him, and his heels akicking the air! 'Twill be a better sight than you'll make, Captain Irons, for all the little matter at Bedford, and Colonel

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Truscott's jade, that died a natural death, in course, last seventh of August. Why," says he, "I have known gentlemen of this kidney now for twenty years, and I'll warrant I never put eyes upon a braver figure of a man than Galloping Dick. This is some nobleman's byblow, surely, Captain Irons," says he, addressing him but watching me.

"Now, damn you!" I cried, getting off my seat, "an' you have not the civility to quit, I'll take leave to quoit you forth myself."

Old Irons stuck out an arm to hold me, being turned very white in the gills at the jars upon himself, but I was scarlet with fury, and I drew a knife on Grubbe.

"Ha!" says he, not changing his tone, but keeping his eye warily upon me, and slipping dexterously aside, "'tis a mettlesome lad. I'll wager him against a shipload of his Majesty's officers." Then, "Put that down," says he in another voice, very sharp, but still quiet. I looked at him, and he burst out laughing. "O fie, Ryder," he said, "to take a jest like this! Come, my cock, come; put up that gully and

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drink for me to a fine moon to-morrow evening. I'll warrant we all love a moon. 'Tis a fine sight to watch the heavens sprinkled with stars and to know that the Lord Almighty is upon His throne." And chuckling to himself over his blasphemy, he called up the landlord with some wine.

But though I was embarked upon this business, and that in a kind of fellowship with him, I would see the rogue burst ere I kept him company. And the truth was that I was now maddened to be linked with him, but I durst not go back upon Creech, as I considered coming forth of the tavern; and, moreover, I had myself drawn Zacchary Mills into the same excursion, a lad of spirit, with a serviceable weapon and a merry pair of lungs. And so it fell that we made the venture, as had been agreed, upon the next evening.

The coach was bound for Chatham, with kegs of his Majesty's guineas for the ships there, and first I must post down the road early in the afternoon to determine a position for our ambuscade. I reckoned to come up with the

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escort over Shooter's Hill, some miles this side of Dartford; and, having marked the spot and laid out a rude plan, I rode into Dartford itself, where I pulled up at the "Pigeons" for a pint of wine. I had no thought at the first but to wash my throat and be off, but the day was warm and the tavern mighty cool and alluring; and there I fell a-talking with a civil-mannered fellow, that was a chandler hard by. He was a comfortable old cock, of an affluent habit, and pretty well to do, as I suspected. He babbled like a mill-stream, and, being on easy terms with the landlord, soon drew him also into the conversation; so that in a little there was the three of us discoursing together just as pleasantly as though we had sung in the same quire all our days. Master Nick-and-Froth, who was an affable party, fetched out a choice bottle for his crony, and, having taken a fancy to myself, nothing will suit but I must join them. Nor was I loth, for as yet it was early, and there was a dusty road 'twixt me and our place of assignation. And that, I suppose, with the good cheer and the undisguised admiration of the two old

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joskins, set me babbling rather plainer than was wise, so that in the end the chandler looks at me inquisitively.

“You have seen a deal of life,” he says. “One might wonder, to be curious, what might be your trade.”

That shut me up in a trice, for I had been talking of bloody things I had seen adventured.

“Ah, yes,” said I carelessly, for I knew it was best to lead 'em boldly out of their suspicions, if so be they had already conceived any. “I ha' seen a damned sight more evil deeds than I could say. But when the Law says ‘Mum,’ why I says ‘Mum,’ too, as in duty bound.”

“Oh!” says the fat chandler brightly. “Are you an officer?” he says.

I winked. “Hark'ee,” said I, “when silence is called, there had best be no questions,” and I nodded at him meaningly. “But an' I might speak of what my masters would fain leave in oblivion, I could tell tales as would astonish you. Why even to-day——” says I, and there broke off. “Bah!” I says, “my tongue wags.”

“We'll ha' some more wine,” says the

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chandler after a moment, and with extreme friendliness.

“Well,” said I, for the whim ran into my head on the moment to set their fat eyes agoggling, “if it be another glass, why I will not say no; but upon that limit I stop. D’ye understand? I stop,” I said, bringing my foot with the stamp on the floor. “His Majesty’s business can ill afford to wait upon any man’s thirst.”

“His Majesty’s business!” cried the fat chandler, exchanging a glance with the inn-keeper, and opening his eyes.

“His Majesty!” says I sharply. “I said nothing of His Majesty. Must you be putting words between a gentleman’s teeth?”

“No, no,” says the fat chandler hastily, “’twas my mistake,” and signed to the landlord to bring another bottle. When it was come, he filled the glasses, and put one to his lips. “Well,” he says, smiling at me amiably, “Here’s to the success of any business you may have in hand, friend; and I’m sure ’tis of importance.”

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“Ah!” says I, after a draught, and shaking my head sagely, “You may say that. Why, if 'twere not for me, that stands here, His Majesty might be ten thousand guineas the poorer this night.”

The chandler lifted his brows at the landlord again, and smiled and nodded, as though he would say, “We are getting to it now.” I brought my fist down upon the bench with a thump.

“Does any man tell me,” I says, “that I'm not the match of a dozen snarling rascals such as may chance to pounce upon His Majesty's coach this side of Chatham?”

“What!” said the chandler, starting. “Is there an escort to Chatham to-night?”

“Rot me,” says I, feigning to stare at him stupidly. “Whose wits are wool-gathering that you gabble about Chatham? I know what I know,” I says, “and I can hold my tongue with any man.”

“Yes, yes,” says old Nick-and-Froth soothingly. “Indeed, sir, 'tis so. You are a very discreet gentleman, I'll warrant, and a brave

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one, too ;” and the two regarded me with fresh esteem and wonder.

But I was not disposed to juggle away the afternoon in the society of a pair of sobersides, and, truth to say, I know not what put me in the humour to fool them so, unless 'twas the wine, which was excellent, and for which they deserved some return. But already I was regretting my piece of sport. Not that I cared two pinches for the simpletons ; but 'tis a wise tongue that keeps the habit of silence. So making them my devours, which on their part were very respectful, I left the tavern and rode back to our tryst at the “Joiners’ Arms” in the little village of Lewisham. There I found Creech in a black mood, but Zacchary bubbling with excitement.

“We’re on a lunatic job, and we’re a pack of fools ; that’s what we are,” says Creech with an oath. And with that I knew that he, too, had been talking with Old Irons.

“Well,” said I, “'twas you put us on to it, Dan, and why in God’s name do you change your tune at this hour of night ?” For it

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angered me to see him whimpering and maybe setting silly notions aflow in the lad's head.

But Zacchary, as it turned out, was game enough. "Come out of that, Dan," he says, laughing. "Fetch out old Blood-Drinker, and let's see his temper. Stab us all, Dan, but we're more than the match of King James's scum."

"There's sense," says I, well enough pleased, "and there's spirit, too; and the sooner you come by your own again, the better for us all, Dan."

"You'll have your belly full soon enough, young fellow," says Dan, with a sneer, turning on Zacchary. "'Tis not the cock that crows the loudest as uses his spurs best. And as for you, Dick Ryder, you know I'm no white liver, and I'll trouble you to take back those words."

"Sink me, Danny, I'll swallow 'em whole," said I, laughing, "if 'twill serve to set you in your stirrups again." But he looked very nasty, and so I took him by the arm aside, and, "Look'ee," I says, "don't go for to spoil the spirit of Zacchary there. The boy's willing:

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and there's stuff in him to stop a regiment. And here's the moral of it. Why, an' so be we have been damned fools enough to rattle the dice for Timothy Grubbe, why we're fools, and there's no more to say. But what's gone is gone, and to curl up with the mullygrubs because the milk is a trifle sour, is neither to your credit nor to mine. And that's plain," I says.

He grumbled a little further, but seeing that he was coming round, I said no more; but that young bantam Zacchary, who was well primed with drink, must needs put out his jerks.

"Let me rot for a corpse," he says, clinking his glass, "but I'd think shame to turn pale afore a small job like this, more especially after twenty years' service. 'Tis not my notion of business," says he, looking very scornfully at Creech.

But I saw that Dan was scowling, and the lad was getting over-ripe with liquor, so I broke in roughly. "Hold up there, you young slip-string," I said, "and let less go in and less come out at your mouth."

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“Damme, Dick Ryder,” says Zacchary, jumping to his feet. “I won't take no such terms from you, for all the fellow you think yourself. No, nor from a cold liver, like Creech,” he cries, returning again to Dan.

“Sit down, you fool,” I said sharply. But Creech was on his legs too, and had his fingers on his pistol, and there was like to be trouble on my hands. I took Zacchary by the collar and threw him back into his chair, where he lay struggling with me.

Creech was furious. “I'll cut the heart out of you,” says he. “You muck-worm, you! I'll slit your gizzard, you——.” But this was more than I could endure, for Zacchary was struggling to be at Creech, and Creech was reaching round me to fall on Zacchary; and all because the one chose to take a fit of temper, and the other had filled his jacket tighter than was good for him.

“Curse you, Dan,” I said, “I'm no watchdog to keep two fools from each other's throat. Drop that pistol,” I says, “and shake yourself together, while I muzzle this bloody-minded

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young rogue." Creech muttered, but let fall his hand, and I pinioned Zacchary with my arms. "By Gad," I said, "but I've a mind to open that ugly sconce of yours. The Bedlamite I was to have bestowed a kindness on a numskull that does not know how to behave before his betters! And this your first job of any account, too!" That seemed to sober him, for he stopped struggling and swearing filthy oaths, and sat sullen in his chair.

When we took the toby, hard upon nine o'clock, the pair were still very surly. But Zacchary's spirits rose presently, for he was but a raw hand with the temper of a boy, and the prospect of the fight scattered his ill-humour. He said little, but whistled busily, forging ahead of us, as though impatient to be over the hill. Creech too was pretty mute, save now and then for an oath which he spat at his nag when it stumbled in a rabbit-hole. But when he had got to the crest of the hill, and looked down upon the open stretch of land beyond, he pulled in, and says he, with another oath, "There's a moon out."

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"The better for us to pick 'em off, Dan," I returned, laughing at him.

"What — Oliver? damn Oliver!"* said Zacchary. "Let's push forward and come to quarters."

"Softly, my young cockerel," I said, "and where the mischief d'ye suppose you'll be finding your game by this?"

"Oh," says Creech, with a sneer, "they're ahiding from Zacchary Mills, that's what they are. They're all afraid of him and his barkers, they are. They know his stomach for blood, they do. We ain't to do nothing, Dick Ryder, but to set down upon our prats and see 'em put up their hands and cry for mercy to this fire-eater here."

"Hold your tongue, Dan," said I angrily, for I could see Zacchary's eyes gleaming. "Wait till we are finished with the job, and then, if you come out clear, you can settle your jealousies together. I'll not come between you," I says. "But there's one road

* NOTE.—A facetious nickname for the moon; designed, it may be, in a humour of compliment, to the Lord Protector.

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before us now, and that's what we must follow."

There was no further word until we had rode down into the flat, and come up with the spot on which I had pitched for the sally. The road here was bordered upon the one side by a tall hedge with a ditch, and upon t'other by a strip of green marsh; and a little below this we took up our stand beneath a clump of elms for rather more than half-an-hour. Zacchary grew very restless, but Creech was stolid enough by now, only turning an eye on the moon from time to time and cursing her for a spoil-sport. And I will admit that she was an interference, for she was a full wheel, and the road spread in a white light, twenty paces before us, so clear that the shadows of the trees lay in a dark wavering mesh along it. But if a gentleman of the road must be hindered by the impudent accidents of the weather, he had best give up roaming and settle down with empty pockets afore a mercer's counter. By-and-bye Zacchary bent his ears to the ground.

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"They're coming," he says, and whipped out his pistols with glee. Sure enough, I could hear far away a rumbling noise, borne down on the wind, which blew sharply from the north-west. "I'll reckon to take two on the first clash," says he boastfully.

"Stand by there," says I brusquely, "and keep your bragging tongue quiet. What would you be up to?"

"Why," says Zacchary, "shan't we march up and cock our pistols at 'em?"

"Yes," says I, "and a shot in the stomach for us all! You fall back, Zacchary Mills, and leave these appointments to me. D'ye think they will pull up for the likes of your pretty face?"

"What shall we do, then?" he asked anxiously.

"You best just follow me," I answered, "and no word or stroke till I give the signal."

And a little after that the coach drew into sight away at the bend of the road. Whereupon I wheeled round and, with Dan on my left and Zacchary clinging close to my right,

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cantered slowly up the highway to meet it. It came swinging down at a merry pace, and flashed out upon the open swamp into the brilliant moonlight; and just at that we put heels to our nags, and rode forward at a hand-gallop. The coach was as plain as if it had been midday, and I could count the heads of the four that sat on the box with the driver. But from the speed at which we came up, they could never have suspected our design. And the first hint of the matter, as well as the first words on the occasion, came from the coachman, who, seeing as we did not divide to let him run through, shouted a warning at us. But we took no notice. "Stand close," says I under my breath, and they both held in tight till the flanks of our horses grazed and brushed against each other.

And then someone rose suddenly upon the box. "What the Devil!" he cried. "Where are you coming, you drunken fools?"

Now, I know the way of drivers, and have never met one who was not for saving his horses an' he could; and sure enough, as I

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had calculated, the coachman, seeing how we still rode on abreast for him, suddenly, and upon instinct, pulled his leaders across the roadway out upon the green marsh. The swiftness of this strategy, when they were in full speed, threw the whole team into confusion, and they pranced and came back upon their haunches, backing the coach with a bump into a puddle of water. But the movement came a second too late for Creech, who, sweeping along on my left, swerved out of line and ran his mare full face upon the struggling prads. The shock sent 'em all to the ground, and Creech in the thick of the mellay. But I had no time to spend upon him then, for at that moment I put a shot in the coachman, lest he should do further mischief, and the next second the fusillade began.

The first thing I was aware of was a bullet through the cuff on my wrist, but by this Zacchary and I had been carried to the rear of the coach, and were using our barkers pretty freely. Zacchary knocked over a tall fellow that was leaning over the top with a blunder-

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buss, and ere his dangling corpse had time to fall off the coach, I sent a bullet through his neighbour. I heard, too, the crack of a piece from the other side, and guessed that Danny was at work. But the top was a bad place for a siege, and the King's men in their fury came rattling down to the ground, shouting, and priming their weapons as they came. The first that landed came at me with a muzzle up, and I, having no shot left for him, must needs meet him with the cold iron, which was an ugly case for me, if his excitement should leave him any aim. But at that very moment down came the clouds upon the moon, and the sky fell thick with darkness. I had spurred Calypso to run him down, and just as the blackness spread there was the noise of his barker, and flop she went upon her foreknees, rolling over in the dust. My shoulder came with a smack upon the road, but in a trice I was out of the saddle and on my feet, and ere he could draw on me had spitted him like a fowl. Suddenly, to my surprise (for I thought she was done for) Calypso got to her legs, and with a whinny

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galloped down the road in a state of panic. But this was no time for considerations of her, and, in truth, I knew she would make for her old stables ; so, gripping my tool, I rushed up to where Zacchary was being hard pressed by three stout fellows, who were hacking at him with point and edge, and driving him step by step into the ditch. As I sprang forward, it ran in my head to wonder where the Devil was Creech, for I had seen nothing of him since he had fallen in the collision, and he might be food for maggots by now. But there and then was the wonder answered, and, indeed, I might have guessed it sooner had I not been so occupied. For there was some ten or so of the escort to start with, and now but four remained, and of the dead I could lay but two to my credit, besides the coachman. Well, just as I pounced on the nearest man that was swiping at Zacchary, a shot rang out, and slap he goes upon his face, wriggling a little. I turned at that, and there was Dan, sure enough, the white light of the moon, which shone forth again, striking on his black face, right in the middle of the frightened

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horses, and propping his pistol on the ribs of the one that had fallen.

“Bravo, Danny!” says I, and stuck my iron through the ribs of Zacchary’s second opponent. But thereupon, and while Zacchary was finishing off the last of ’em, I heard a sound behind me and felt something tingle in my side. Turning about I came face to face with a sort of officer man by the coach side, with a red cut across his face, which maybe was some of my own handiwork. The point had slipped through my thigh, and had I not moved, would, doubtless, have gone to my midriff. I turned mighty dizzy of a sudden, and I remember that his face went from me in a mist; I had, moreover, a sickly sense of wobbling on my legs. But by an effort of my mind I recall squaring myself on them, and then, feeling still that I was going, I lunged forward blindly. My point took him somewhere, and he went back upon his head under the wheels. I myself was carried with a bang against the coach, and leaned there, supporting myself vaguely for a moment, until I grew conscious that it was

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shifting. Then I drew off somehow, and opened my eyes. It was the plunging of the scared horses that was shaking the coach, and as I looked my gaze fell stupidly upon the fellow under the wheels, who was struggling to rise in a feeble fashion. The horses backed and jumped forward, and the wheel dragged over his neck, and after that he stirred no more.

Then it seemed to me that there was a long pause. There was a cricket buzzing in my ears, and a flock of sheep came dancing before my eyes, lavalting up and down. But after a time I looked about, and there was silence on the night; and then again someone came running up against me, and I heard Zacchary's voice, crying in a jubilant tone, "I ha' killed three, Dick," says he, "I ha' killed three," slapping me on the shoulder.

"Damn you," says I, "keep your hands off me, you dung-fork," and then I burst out laughing. Zacchary's face was pretty plain by this time, and I saw him looking at me.

"Ha' they done you?" he says.

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“Where’s Creech?” says I; but, Lord, I knew where Creech would be, if he were alive; and there he was, for sure, rifling the pockets of the escort. “Give me a hand,” says I to Zacchary, “there’s a bodkin through my kidneys.”

“We finished ’em off,” he cries. “I ha’ killed three,” repeating the phrase in a silly braggart way.

“You bloody-minded young tyger,” I says. “What is it, who killed whom? Stand up there, Dan,” I says, “and let’s get to business.”

“’Twas my blade as done it all,” says Zacchary in excitement.

“Keep your mouth, you young devil,” I said, for I was fretted with my wound; and I jerked my elbow into his side for a reminder. Now, I was leaning full heavy upon Zacchary’s shoulder, and my face was turned to where Creech was stooping among the corpses; when all of an instant the quiet was startled, and Zacchary, loosening his hold on me, slipped to the earth with a groan. I fell with his body, which quivered under me, but pulling myself up quickly stared at Creech.

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"What the Hell is this?" said I.

Creech met my eyes in bewilderment. "There's no one left," he says, in a low voice.

"Where did that come from?" said I. And just then by way of answer came another crack, and a bullet passed Creech's nose.

"My God!" says he, and whisked about. There was the pause of an instant, and a third report sounded, and Creech staggered, and then began to run with a shambling, tottering gait away upon the London road. But I stood staring. And suddenly out of the coach a black figure jumped hastily, and running round to the front, cut loose the dead nag, and clambered upon the box.

"Hell!" said I, and forthwith made for the coach as fast as my shaking legs would let me. The man had gotten the reins in his hand when I reached it; and I had just time to fling myself at a strap on the rumble, when the team plunged and reared under the whip, and the wheels turning slowly, the coach rolled on sideways for a few paces, and then lumbering

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upon the hard road, broke into a canter towards Chatham.

Dangling from the leathern strap, I was bumped from point to point along the way, which was like to be bad for my wound, as I soon discovered from the growing pain in my groin, and a further seizure of faintness. And yet it passed my wits how I was to struggle up to the body of the coach, with it in motion and my strength running out on a tide. But as the job was fairly set for me, I was not the poltroon to give in without a wrestle, and so very slowly and very feebly I hauled myself up, till my legs drew off the ground, and my hands clutched the railing of the seat. By good luck my wrists held, and though I felt the muscles shaking like jelly in my arms, I pulled myself higher still, until at last my nose rose over the level of my knuckles. And there I hung suspended for a time, with very quick breath, and a deathly sickness in my belly. But I was not yet in extremity, despite the ugly circumstances, and gathering my spirits for a final essay, I flung myself as it were forward into the air with a

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kick, and came down with my breast upon the iron rails and the rest of me stuck out over the road. After that it was a small matter by comparison to wriggle across the seat on to the coach-top, and here for full five minutes I lay sweating like a horse, and with the trees and old Oliver and the whole environing landscape rushing round and swaying in my head. But when I picked up my senses, I settled down pretty comfortable in the seat, and began to look about me and consider. The first thing I set eyes upon was the dark figure on the box, bent over the horses, and though I could make out very little, for the moon was soon in jail again, the turn of his back seemed somehow familiar.

But now, when I had time to reflect, it appeared to me that I had run my neck into a damned foolish business. For here was the stage, with all the bloody marks of battle on it, and one dead body at least, as I could perceive, rolling about on top—here was the coach, I say, running straight for Dartford, with me seated there, like a

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lamb, for a turn to Tyburn. Just as these considerations turned sharply in my mind, and I was vaguely revolving the chance of an escape from the quandary I had run into with so much pains, the man on the box pulled up, and we came to a stop abreast of a patch of wood. The dead fellow that was jumping about on the roof settled down quietly at that, and I had but time to follow his example and lie flat between the seats as the moon shone forth once more, when the man skipped down lightly from his perch and, coming round the coach, opened the door. This tickled my curiosity, and by edging myself along I could thrust my nose over the roof and observe his movements. Then it was for the first time that the full design of this abominable plot was revealed to me; for the moonlight struck clear upon his face, and it was the face of the wrynecked scoundrel, Timothy Grubbe. I had well-nigh screamed out in my rage to discover his double perfidy, but I kept the oaths under and watched him closely. He scrambled into the coach, and reappeared next instant, carrying in his arms

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a heavy keg, under the burthen of which he staggered across the road into the brushwood. As soon as this was dispatched he returns and fetches me out a second, which he proceeds to hide in the same way; and he repeats the performance till the coach is empty! By this it was plain that the vile rogue was concealing the King's treasure, and I could ha' ripped the vitals out of him, and would ha' done it then and there, but that I was without a weapon of any kind, and my wound would barely suffer me to sit up, let alone engage with a sound man like him. But when he had mounted the box again and drove off, no doubt in high glee, I'll take oath, weapon or no weapon, that I would have climbed over the roof and choked him from behind if I had had the free use of my limbs. Old Irons was right, and to be mixed up with a stinkard like that was a piece of folly for a boy. Why, it was for us dolts to settle the escort, while he sat comfortable in his hole, and never so much as showing a face in the fight! And when that was done, it was a pistol through the window for Zacchary and

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Creech and me, and the King's pictures all for him! This discovery sent me into a black choler, in which I would hear no suggestions of prudence for my own safety. I swore I would be even with him, if only for the blood of Zacchary. But the Devil of it was that here was I being driven into Dartford with never a word to say for myself. 'Twas true, he was in ignorance that I sat behind him, and this set me thinking, so that presently, what between wrath and the cordial inwards of a silver pocket vial I carried, I had contrived a manœuvre to pursue when we reached the town. 'Twas hazardous, but, the Lord knows, I was less like to care for hazards at that moment than ever in my life.

And in this wise we rattled into Dartford, each of us, I daresay, encumbered with strong emotions. Timothy Grubbe drew up before an inn, and descending from the box rapped loudly at the door. But as for me I took no heed of him after that, for letting myself in a gingerly way to the ground upon the other side I shambled miserably off into the night.

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By good fortune that same afternoon I had remarked the office of the Justice, and thither I now made my way with my best speed. I could not forbear a grin to myself to think of me on an enterprise like this, to confront a Justice in his own house. 'Twas pitch and toss at the best, I knew, but I would have the heart out of Timothy Grubbe somehow. So when I was got unto the Justice's door I knocked smartly for admittance, and presently you might ha' seen me hob-anobbing with his worship, him all eyes and mouth, listening to my tale.

"How many was there, did you say?" says he.

"There was six of 'em," I replied, "and bloody butchers all, as this rip in my side will witness."

"Poor fellow!" says the Justice kindly, "pour yourself another glass;" and looks at me out of his mild eyes with interest. "But you secured one scoundrel," he says.

"Secured," says I, "yes; and that's the fact. Left for dead I was, as I'm telling you, and him standing over the poor dead bodies to

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filch 'em of their purses, when down comes my pistol-butt on his head."

"You're a lad of mettle," says he approvingly, "and this ruffian is safely bestowed in the coach?"

"Well," says I, "and that's where he was; but, as your worship will perceive, I am all of a daze, and maybe the villain will escape his bonds, if so be your worship will not lay hands on him forthright."

"Ay, that I will," said he, "we'll despatch the rogue;" and, rising from his chair, he summoned his men. But at that instant there came a noisy clatter on the door, and the Justice stared at me. "Why, who is this at such a time?" he asked.

I knew well enough who it was, for Timothy Grubbe was not the man to leave himself touched with suspicions, and I had already fathomed his cunning purpose; which, indeed, was why I had forestalled him. His worship went to the door, and presently I heard voices in the hall, the one of which I distinguished easily enough. And after a little, as I sat

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sipping my wine, the Justice came back, in a rare perplexity of spirits and mind.

"Why, what is this?" he says. "Here is a fellow that brings a tale as like your own as may be, save that 'tis he is the hero."

I started, and regarded him in an amaze. "Why," says I, "all was killed but me and the prisoner, and that I'll swear." We stared at each other. "What like of a man?" I asked, in a low voice.

"Why, a small fellow," says he, "with his head to one side."

"My God!" I cried, feigning an excitement; "take him, your worship! 'Tis he, don't let him escape."

"Why, what's amiss?" he says, surprised.

"'Tis the man himself," I said.

"Your prisoner?" he asked. I nodded. "O my Lord," says the Justice, rubbing his hands, "this is fine news. He has given himself into our hands. You shall see him, you shall face him, and identify him;" and he chuckled. I chuckled, too.

"Why, yes," I says, "I'll warrant I'll face

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him." With that, out pops the Justice, and soon after comes me in again with Timothy Grubbe, sure enough, on his heels.

"Perhaps," says he, "you will repeat your statement afore this gentleman."

I could scarce keep from roaring with laughter, to see Timothy's white face chapfall so suddenly at me sitting there confidential.

"Yes, that is the fellow," I said; "I'd know him among a hundred by his ugly neck."

"Do you know who he is?" asked the Justice.

"Well," said I dubiously, "as like as not, he would be that same black ruffian, Dick Ryder."

"I've heard of him, I've heard of him," says the Justice, rubbing his hands again.

But Timothy Grubbe was no fool, as I knew very well, and though he had started at the first, and had worn a frown of embarrassment upon his face throughout this colloquy, he was contained enough now when he addressed his worship.

"Mr Justice," says he sharply, "I have no notion what sort of figure you play in this

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farce, but, whatever it be, I must interfere with your amusement for a moment, and ask you to arrest this man in the King's name."

His worship stared, and then laughed a little. "O!" says he, "that's it, is it?"

Grubbe turned on him. "This man," he said, speaking in his harshest voice, "though the Devil, his father, knows how he comes here, was the chief of the gang that attacked and robbed the stage, as I have informed you."

He said it so firmly, and with such an appearance of authority, that his worship looked staggered, and said nothing. It was time for me to put in my fable, if I was to keep my post; and "Ah!" says I, very sarcastic, "and 'tis a brave bold tongue you ply for a common cut-throat. You have it all pat, as one would say. And perhaps you could swear to 'em all in a court of justice? No one better! And I suppose, my fine fellow, 'tis me that's this same Dick Ryder, and 'tis you as had charge of His Majesty's treasure."

Timothy Grubbe looked at me, with lowered brows, out of his little red eyes. "I don't

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know what name you put on yourself," he said in his rasping voice. "I have no such intimate acquaintance with gentlemen of the road. But I do know that I shall have you clapped in prison ere an hour. But why do you delay?" says he, addressing the Justice imperiously. "I have already asked you to place this fellow under arrest."

His worship was very much disturbed. "Softly, softly," he says, taking a pinch of snuff absently. "How am I to judge between you?"

"Judge," says Timothy with a sneer. "I warrant His Majesty will have a word to say upon judges when the news of this goose-work reaches his ears."

The Justice turned red. "Why——," he stammered, and looked at Grubbe with doubt.

"Mr Justice," I cut in, for I could see the case was turning against me, "I ask you to seize this man on a charge of highway robbery and murder."

Grubbe gave me an ugly smile, as though he had gotten the best of me now, and I will

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admit that I was a little dashed myself. "But there is no evidence," says his worship, frowning. "There is none to speak to the truth of either."

And at that word I took a notion that sent the blood spinning in my veins and brought me to my feet very solemn and certain. I have always come out of difficulties upon the proper side, in some degree by the favour of fortune, but the more, I take it, thanks to my own ingenious wit. And here was the chance to turn to account an idle humour, which I had till now regarded more as a piece of reckless folly.

"As to that," says I slowly, "there's plenty to speak to my identity, but it is an ill hour to fetch 'em from Town." Timothy Grubbe grinned. "Yet I am loth to keep your worship in suspense," I says, "and myself under so foolish a suspicion, and, faith, we'll e'en put up with a witness or two in Dartford, an' it like your worship."

Timothy shot a sharp glance at me, and the Justice gave a sigh of relief. "Come," says

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he more cheerfully, "that is well; and we'll take the witnesses at once."

"Indeed," says I, with my eyes on Grubbe, "if your worship will but fetch 'em out of bed, there's an honest chandler by the name of Tyrwhitt, of this town, and the host of the 'Pigeons,' that knows what my business was this day."

"Tyrwhitt!" says the Justice. "Yes, I know him—a worthy fellow. We'll have 'em both;" and, opening the door briskly, he gave an order to his men.

Timothy scowled, and scratched his chin, with his evil eyes upon me, who sat down again, indifferent, and finished my wine. But Timothy said nothing, nor indeed did anything further pass between us three until the return of the messengers, when there was a rap on the door, and the Justice stepped across.

"Come in, Tyrwhitt," he says; "come in, my good man."

When the fat chandler was got in, and ere the Justice could say another word, he served my purpose better than I could have foreseen.

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For he gazed about in a stupid, sleepy fashion, looked vacantly on Grubbe, and then, his eyes dropping on me, he blinked and gave a cry.

“Well, sir,” says the Justice, “do you know this man?”

“Why, yes,” says the fat chandler, brightening up, “’tis the gentleman as had charge of His Majesty’s gold to take to Chatham.”

Grubbe started aback, and made as though to speak, but was silent. “Ha!” says the Justice. “Now it seems we are getting upon the scent.” And thereupon he called in the landlord of the “Pigeons,” who entered in some trepidation. “Do you know this man?” asked the Justice, now very stiff and formal.

Old Nick-and-Froth looked at Grubbe and shook his head, and then, with a glance at me, said in a public whisper to his worship, “’Tis an officer of His Majesty’s, upon a secret service,” and nodded mysteriously.

“Oho!” said his worship with a smile. “Faith, I think we have it now,” and he regarded Timothy sternly. “I think,” he says, “my good highwayman, that the little-ease in

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Dartford Compter is the place for you," and chuckled as if he had made a jest. But Timothy said nothing, shifting his small eyes from one to another viciously.

"What!" says the innkeeper, "is this a highwayman?" and retreated a step.

The Justice nodded in good humour. "But he won't be one much longer, I fear me," he says.

"Faith, 'twas a matter I know much about," says the fat chandler complacently, "for me and this gentleman discussed it over our wine."

"Ah!" says the Justice with an approving glance at me, "a fine tall fellow that, Tyrwhitt, whom I commend to your kind hospitality for his wound's sake."

"O, I shall be well enough, your worship," said I, getting on my feet, "and I will e'en take the generous offer of my friend here for a bandage and another glass."

"And welcome," says the chandler, very warmly.

All the time Timothy Grubbe said nothing, only looking at me with a scowling smile. He

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was a reptile of parts and spirits, was Timothy, and no doubt he saw there was nothing more to be said that bout. So he held his tongue; he never was one to waste his time, was Grubbe.

But I was not going to part like that. I would have an oath out of him somehow.

"'Tis a pity," I said, turning to go, "that the rogues got away with the gold."

"Ay, 'tis a pity," said the Justice.

"I wish," says I, "that I knew where 'twas hid—in some patch of wood, maybe." The Justice nodded, but Timothy looked up suddenly, a flash of intelligence lit his eyes, and he ground his teeth fiercely and muttered, giving me a bloody look. I could not refrain from laughing at that. "Well," says I, "'tis a comfort to know that one rogue at least will take no share in the plunder." The Justice laughed too, and they all laughed; and upon that I got out of the house, roaring with laughter. For I had left Timothy with that news to spend a very uncomfortable night.

But as for me, I was in high feather, and after patching up my wound, which the

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chandler's good lady tended, and narrating a string of adventures over a steaming bowl, I crept out of the house when all were abed, and, mounting a nag which I found in the stables, rode without more ado to the little piece of wood in which the gold was hid. I distributed as much as I could carry in packages about my saddle, and having dissembled the rest against a later opportunity, I set out in good spirits; reaching Maidstone early the next day, where I remained in quarters for a week, or may be more.

Of my Incarceration in the Jug, and of
how the Prisoner-Ordinary and
I drank Wine together

2

Chapter V

Of my Incarceration in the Jug, and of
how the Prisoner-Ordinary and
I drank Wine together

'TWAS on the third day of November, in the year 1687, His Majesty's Assizes being then in full session, that I was first clapped into the Jug. Timothy Grubbe it was that managed it, and a dirtier trick never stood to his account. For I had rode up that morning from Uxbridge, after an absence of three months from Town, and no sooner am I arrived than the news reaches me through a crimping-master of my acquaintance at the "Bull's Head," that the traps had their paws on Polly Scarlett, she lying ill in the Ratcliffe Highway. There was never a tenterhook alive durst put his nose inside the "Bull's Head," where the company was too hot for a regiment of dragoons; and so they must needs find this way to fetch me forth.

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The report was no Jack o'Lanthorn, neither, for Timothy, as I discovered, had put the beagles upon her that very day, upon the news communicated by his spies that I was come to Town. The Law has no queasy stomach, and will undertake a scurvy job with any; but indeed there was no suspicion upon Polly, and the charge upon which they took her was, if you please, the possession of certain gold guineas with His Majesty's viznomy upon them. These, they would make out, were a parcel of the King's treasure, the which I had snatched out of Timothy's own fingers by Dartford. I knew it was odds but the message was a snare for my feet, for all that I questioned the crimp so closely; but then, I was not for letting the risque hang over Polly. It made me mad to think upon her in Timothy's hands, with his pink eyes a-cocking at her. I was not to be averted by such scum, whether it was my capture that was plotted or no; and that very evening, after the fall of dusk, I set forth on foot for the Ratcliffe Highway, counterfeited for a sailor, with a stout hanger at my thigh.

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When I reached the house it was pitch black, and a light shone forth only from an upper window. Sure enough, there was an officer ostentatiously set upon the doorstep, and keeping a sharp watch. I knew that I was like to get little by strategy out of Grubbe; it was in a bold front my only hopes lay; and so up I marched with a rolling gait, and, says I, feigning a drunken hiccough, "What's agog?" I says, "and upon whose door are you sticking out your elbows?"

The trap gave me a glance, and seeing as I made for the door, pushed me off with his arm. "The Law is in charge here," he says shortly.

"Law!" says I, with a stupid stare. "Law!" and I fell to laughing. "Damn me, what's the old Antick atwixt Jenny Rumbold and me?" for that I knew was the name of a piece in the house.

He observed me from head to foot, without ever a suspicion. "Get you gone," says he, contemptuously; "there's no kixsy-winsy for you here."

"Damme," says I, with another hiccough,

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and fingering for my hanger, "but I'm in the mind to carve your face after a private pattern of my own." He closed with me, but, getting a clutch upon his waist, I threw him, and fell to battering on the door with the hilt of my weapon, shouting the while as one full of drink. That brought some one from the inside, and in another moment I was in the grip of a sturdy fellow on the doorstep, with my other friend handling me freely from behind.

"What the Devil's this?" said the newcomer. "Is this our man, Cockerel?"

"No," says t'other, puffing for breath; "'tis a scurvy tarpaulin with a libidinous body full of liquor."

"And that's true," says I, lurching against 'em, and nodding my head with a foolish smile; and with that I called "Jenny" at the top of my voice, in a most endearing manner.

"Bah!" said the big officer, who seemed to be in a superior position, "push the drunken fool out."

"No," says I, "push the drunken fool in, young fellow."

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The catch-polls broke out laughing, seeming to be touched by the humour of my rejoinder, and one of 'em gives me a shove that despatched me reeling against the stairway in right earnest. But picking myself up I started a fol-de-rol in a quavering voice, and staggered noisily up the stairs. And all would have gone well, but just as I had gotten to the landing, who should come out of Polly's room but the arch-janizary himself; who no sooner had set eyes on me than he uttered a thin cackle, and blew a shrill whistle through his teeth. To say the truth, I took longer to recognise him in the gloom than he me, or I should have spoiled that game for him; but after that it was too late, and turning I leaped down the stairs.

“Seize him!” yelled Grubbe. “Take him!” he clamoured; and the traps met me at the bottom. I laid one low with my hanger, and I let a hole through a second, seeing which, the third drew off.

“Curse you for a pack of curs,” screeched Grubbe, and came tumbling down the stairs upon me behind. He had no weapon, but the

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force of his weight dismissed me sprawling, and ere I could pull myself up, there was three of 'em sitting upon my body.

So there was the curtain down upon that part of the play, and the Jug for me, sure enough. But I should not ha' minded so much had it not been for Grubbe, who came about me discharging his jests with an air of affectionate condolence. It was "Poor Dick! And that you should have come to this after all Timothy's warnings!" And it was, "Ah, Dick, the Lord abideth His time to avenge Himself on evil-doers." And then he would turn to his bum-bailies—(Damn them!)—and beg them to take care of me, for that I was a fastidious young gentleman of tender nurture, whom His Majesty destined to high promotion. But I said never a word in answer, and kept my lips tight until they had delivered me in Newgate. I was not going to let Timothy Grubbe raise a sound out of me.

There was sorry company in the Jug, but I could have ordered things tolerably, for it held a cracksman or two I knew pretty well

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by sight; only the next trick the knave played on me was to have me laid in irons and disposed in a solitary cell. It was declared that I was a desperate fellow, and the dubsman told me with a grin that he had long hoped for the pleasure of my fellowship, and had kept his best set against my coming. I dare say this was true enough, for there were few parts of the country but I was as well known as the King himself. Moreover, those that enjoyed the liberties of the Jug would have spread my name; to witness which, it was a brave reception I got upon my entrance. But to be chained within a lonely chamber, without ever the chance of a diversion, went against my stomach. And the place was foul to boot, and full of rats.

Here I lay for some time, until my case was heard at the Assizes. Now, Grubbe was a cunning devil, and I knew that 'twas not of the Chatham coach I should hear, seeing that was too delicate a business upon which to hazard his own reputation. But there was plenty against me without that, and first of all up

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comes the affair at Petersfield, with which Grubbe was well acquainted. And as if that were not enough, they had furbished up a paltry business on Hampstead Heath, in the which I was under the necessity to quiet a noisy fellow with my barker. This, it turns out, if you please, was no less a personage than a Sheriff of the City. And after that the document wound up with the officer that I had cut down in the Highway; as if the killing of a catchpoll, good Lord, made any difference among respectable people! Still, though the one case was black against me, and Grubbe, no doubt, had ample private particulars of the others, I must face my position with the best phiz possible. So I laid hold of a gentleman of the law to speak in my defence. He was a man in repute for a mighty clever fellow, and had had much practice at the Assizes these many years. In his earlier days he had had sharp work under Old Noll, and of late he had been with Bloody Jeffreys in the West. He was a grasping, watery-livered creature, with his fee ever in

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the tail of his eye; but that was no bar to me, seeing I was just then very comfortable in pocket; and so I bought him with a bag of goldfinches, and sent him off with his pockets bulging with king's pictures, to digest at his leisure. I knew it was a bad case for me, and that fact was plainer upon the morning of the trial, when I was fetched into Court atween two turnkeys, and with the darbies still upon my wrist. It seems that they were in a taking lest even then Dick Ryder should spread his wings! When I was brought in and looked about me, there was the Judge regarding me sourly from his bench, and hobnobbing with him stood a tall, fat-bellied man, with a white wig and a very scarlet face. This was the cully as was to talk me up the ladder. And with the sight of them laughing together I knew 'twas odds but I should get no fair play that day. But I was not to hoist the white feather on that account, and so I just wagged my head to my man to begin. But instead, up jumps Pot-belly, and starts upon a tedious harangue, motioning at me with his fingers

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and bowing to the Judge, raising his eyes to the ceiling, and gesticulating like the gross ape he was. I paid little heed myself, being long past patience after the first ten minutes; but presently out pops some one from the crowd, and ere I knew it, was swearing away as to what I had done here, and what coat I wore, and how his arm was a-bleeding, with other matter of the sort.

“’Twas a bloody deed, my Lord,” says he, and looks at me fearfully.

I knew the oaf now for the rascal of the gentleman I had run through at Petersfield. It was a flagrant piece of foolishness, for sure, was that Petersfield job: in broad daylight too, and within a mile of the town!

“Do you recognise him?” asks his Lordship.

“Yes, my Lord,” says the fellow.

“You are sure?” says his Lordship: “look at him.”

The coachman turned a frightened glance upon me, for he was in a rare panic, and I shot him a black look full of menace.

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Whether it was that, or that his wits were out, I know not, but says he, "No," says he.

"Come, come," said his Lordship, with a frown, "you shall not blow hot and cold in this fashion. Is that the man?"

Whereupon the craven, who was all a-sweat with terror, lost the hold upon his tongue, and stammered and stuttered and blinked, and finally appealed to the Judge to spare him, and to the Almighty to have mercy on him, for that what he said was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"Pah! take the fellow down," says his Lordship. "Call another witness."

But if, so far, the fact was in my favour, I was not to get off so easily upon other scores; and the chief business of all was the appearance of the Sheriff I had wounded. The old mawkin had a voice like a parrot, harsh and high, and delivered his evidence all in one shrill squeak. I will confess that what he said was true enough, and went badly against me; so much so that I chafed to myself that I had not stuck

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him, while I was about it. After that I knew it was all over with me, unless my little lawyer could serve. He had sat very still, making notes upon his papers industriously, and asking a question or so pretty sharply at times. And indeed, it was ludicrous to see the pair of 'em, for he, like t'other, was fat, only small, and bald under his wig; and the two kept jumping up and down opposite one another, as if 'twas a game of see-saw. But by degrees his face began to lengthen and he shook his head over his shoulder to some one behind; and at that, and seeing the case gathering against me, I slipped my temper, for he had done little enough for his money.

So, "Damn you," I bawled to him, "speak up, you little beer-keg, you!" At which he went scarlet, and there was a laugh in the Court. But the Judge scowled, and I was hustled by the turnkeys.

And then, when at last it fell to him to speak, a mighty poor figure he made. He ranted like a Roundhead. If you were to believe him, I was a low-spirited cur enough,

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that had no thought but to keep his mother in bread and his wife in garters. 'Twas a marvel that he did not attach half a score of gaping brats upon me. According to him I was a half-starved sort of snip, as took my meals in a boiling-house, and was as regular for church as a girl in her teens. He pursued these silly lies so long and with such satisfaction that I could endure him no further.

“Gag that fat fool,” says I, “for an’ the topsman must have me he may have me and welcome, but I’ll meet him after my own fashion, and not with the character of a poltroon.”

There was little more to be said after that. And soon the Judge got to his feet, and says he: “Prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to urge why I should not pass sentence upon you?”

“My lord,” says I, speaking very loftily, “an’ I had gotten a lawyer with a proper tongue in his mouth, and some brains to his skull, and an’ it had not been for yonder sour-featured Sheriff, this honourable Court

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might ha' come to a different resolution. But seeing as things are thus, why pass your sentence, and be damned," says I.

Thereat he puts on a little black cap, and turns to me with a solemn Anabaptist face. But I was not behind him at that, and so smack upon my head goes my own hat, and I surveyed him with as long and mopish a countenance as himself. And at the conclusion of his discourse I marched off as jaunty as you may wish, atween my guards. There was never a Judge on His Majesty's bench as could get a tremor out of Dick Ryder.

Well, there was I now laid in the Jug again, in my little-ease of a cell, and scarce a fortnight 'twixt me and Tyburn. And first, you must know, they had me watched very sharply, for Grubbe had whispered in their ears that I was a devil that would break out of hell. 'Twas the dubsman told me this in excuse for harsher usage, for he was decent enough out of his office, and entertained an admiration for me. Nor was Grubbe much at fault, for it was not in my mind to rest in my dungeon convenient

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to Jack Ketch, and I vow that I would have burst their very walls and disported myself openly in London Town, had I gotten the liberty of my limbs. For that again I owed Timothy a grudge, and I was not the man to forget a black debt, not if I had to wait a twelvemonth. But I will admit that my plight took a dark colour, with me in chains, and never a soul, not even Polly, permitted in my cell. It was plain that they would hold me if they could. But, Lord, 'tis before obstacles that a man's heart rises, and if I was to be daunted by the raw circumstances of my peril, I should ha' given up the road, in a manner of tongue, ere ever I took to it. So with that I considered very deeply, taking counsel in my hold. I had many friends outside Newgate, if I could but exchange messages; and presently I thought upon a plan, which was no sooner conceived than forthwith I started to put it into execution. And first I must deliberate on my behaviour, for upon that all hung. What does I do then but in the first few days after my sentence break out into paroxysms of fury whenever

Gallopig Dick

the gaoler poked his nose over the doorway? I roared like a bull at him, rattling my irons furiously and flinging my body upon the stones till you would have thought that all the devils were collected out of Christendom in that one corner. The gaoler himself, with whom I had been upon terms previously, took affright at me, and not without reason, for I threw my hands in his face when he entered with my food, grinding my teeth at him till the edges cracked. 'Twas small wonder soon that I got the name of being a bedlam: the appreciation of death having, as they said, robbed me of my senses. And then it came about that not one of them would venture into the dungeon. Lord, it fairly split me to see 'em run when I charged at the doorway. But this was a piece of my policy, for I guessed very well what would happen; and sure enough, after this had gone forward for a couple of days, in marched the Ordinary for to quiet me with the consolations of religion, by the Governor's command. He entered in a trembling state, his knees giving as he came, but I sat sullen in my corner

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with never a word or a sign, till he was arrived nearly abreast of me, leaving the door open for flight, and the dubsmen all agog with the expectation of an uproar.

“My son,” says the Ordinary in a quaking voice, seeing I kept calm, and inspired, maybe, by this, “it is my duty to prepare you for your appearance before your Maker.”

At that I gave vent to a yell and brought my chains with a crash upon the floor, sending him at the same time a devilish look. He withdrew at top speed; but fearing, I suppose, that I might make a rush for them, the turnkeys banged the door, and there was his reverence all alone with me. His face betrayed the most abject consternation, and he turned white even to his red nose. Whereupon I could hold my laughter no longer, and broke out into a fit of merriment.

This seemed to encourage him a little, for, still keeping his distance, he addressed me: “I am glad,” says he, “to see that you keep up your spirits, my poor fellow, in these heavy circumstances.”

Galloping Dick

“Spirits!” says I, scowling at him, “I have had enough of spirits, damn them! Take ’em away!” I yelled, and fell to cursing. He made no sign, but still remained in the corner near the door, in a fresh fit of shivering. But that was not in my scheme; and so, feigning to come out of my seizure, I turned to him in a tremulous imploring fashion. “An’ you be a man of God,” I bleated, “and the Minister of His Divine mercy, rid me of these Devils, reverend sir.”

This put a new face on him at once, and his tune changed with alacrity. “Why, certainly, certainly, my good man,” says he, coming towards me briskly. “’Tis the function of us servants of the Almighty to discharge such duties to the unfortunate. What ails you?”

I groaned, and then, taking him greedily by the hand, whispered, “’Tis the spirits of the murdered as haunt me, your reverence.”

By this he was completely in control of himself, and took out his snuff-box quite pompously. “Yes, yes,” says he, tapping it, “’tis true. For they that have the blood of their

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fellow-creatures upon them, how shall they escape the damnation of Hell?" and he regarded me complacently.

He was a tall, thin fellow, with an ancient wig that sat awry upon him, and a face blotched and bubuckled with drinking. His arms and shanks were long and bony, and seemed ever in his way, so that you took the impression that he had more than his share of them; he looked for all the world like a dragon-fly in liquor. He stretched his ungainly carcass on the floor, and doubling up his knees, snuffed with a satisfied air. I groaned again.

"If you have shed blood," observed the Ordinary, "blood shall be exacted of you, and after death, to burn in the fires of Gehenna. Thus doth the Holy Writ imply. The tears of a sinner avail not, for though in God is our refuge, yet shall not the judge of all do right?" He wiped his nose with his fingers, and looked at me.

"But if I repent," said I humbly, "the Almighty will pardon me?"

The Ordinary smiled in a superior way, and

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dusted his legs. "Undoubtedly," he returned, "there is a chance for such as truly repent them of their iniquities, but who testifieth to the sincerity of that repentance, seeing that we are but dust and ashes? Moreover I would ask you to observe that it is more comfortable to feel that the Lord takes vengeance upon them that break His commandments, as He rewards them that keep them. Thirdly," says he, "whom He loveth He chasteneth."

Now by this I had perceived that the Ordinary was somewhat gone in liquor, having primed himself, as I imagine, for our encounter; but it was no odds to me in what condition I found him, provided I could make a tool of him. And this I seemed likely to achieve, for when he left me, it was with the most polite messages of religion and a promise to see me again that evening for the further administration of sacred comforts. From the word, too, which I had of the gaoler, he took credit, I found, for having tamed me.

"I have exorcised him," said he to the dubsman. "There's nothing like the consolations of

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the Church to exorcise the evil spirit." And he stalked about the Yard among the prisoners, holding his head high.

Things now fell out as I had plotted, for, sure enough, the Ordinary made his appearance in the evening with a mouth full of admonitions and prayers. He was now deeper than ever in wine, having, as I supposed, spent the better part of the day in celebrating his spiritual triumph. He wore a great air of patronage, and was extremely affable, standing with his lean legs well apart, in order for to keep his feet, and poking a bent forefinger at me to emphasise his instructions.

"Ryder," says he, "I fear that you are a rogue, a devilish rogue. By the tokens of the law, discovered in His Gracious Majesty's Courts, you have taken the blood of man, and whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. There is a solemn word for your comfortable consideration. When I am gone, and, my orisons discharged, I am retired to the innocent sleep of a child, think upon it with tears and sighs and bitter mortifyings of

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the spirit. For the Almighty has appointed unto Him ministers of His Wrath, the which shall exact of you the penalty to the uttermost farthing." Whereat he hiccoughed, and incautiously changing the position of his feet, sat down upon the floor very suddenly. "Ryder," says he, proceeding still solemnly, and without any appearance of having discovered his collapse, "I warn you as a priest of the Church, to flee from the wrath to come. What is man but as the grass that to-day is and to-morrow is burned in the oven? Yea, what is he, but as the flame of a candle that is blown out with a breath? And I will put it thus unto you, for your surer edification. Firstly, there is the sin of Lasciviousness, the which deserves reprobation. Verily it has its reward. Secondly, to divide our discourse into heads, there is the sin of Drunkenness. The drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Mark that, ye that look upon the wine when it is red. Thirdly, there is also the sin of Covetousness, the which even princes commit. And finally, to pass over the several Cardinal vices, which at this moment

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have slipped my memory, there is the sin of Murder.”

He spoke the word as it were with a sort of bellow, and contemplated me sternly, his bibulous eyes, a little asquint, resting weakly on my face. But whether 'twas the dramatic pause he made that was too long for his wits, or that he was tired of the matter, he resumed presently without seeming to remember upon what he had been talking. “Ryder,” says he, “the ale in this Jug is admirable, but the wine is swipes for a tender stomach,” and at once fell to chuckling in delight of his jest.

“And that’s true, your reverence,” said I, “as I can bear witness. ’Tis hard that a man who is picked out for death may not so much as bowse a pint of good wine to warm his heart against the rope.”

He nodded approvingly, and we condoled in quite an affectionate manner; the which set presently smacking his lips over the rare flasks he had drunk in former times, more particularly in the company of Jerry Starbottle.

“Aye,” says he, “that was an excellent year,

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Ryder: a better I have no wish to spend. There was Hack, and Higgins, and old Jeremy Starbottle, all rode to the Tree that year. Ah, there was king's pictures and to spare, lad! Faith, there was more of 'Stand and Deliver' in those days in a week than the whole squadron of you might venture in a twelvemonth nowadays," and he sighed over the recollection.

It was in my plan to set his tongue blabbing, the more so as I desired to be upon terms with him; and so I listened very humbly, though Hack and Higgins were none so mighty, nor Jerry Starbottle neither. Indeed the tales of these gentry have suffered undue enlargement. But I said no word about that, merely shaking my head along of him, and saying, "Ah yes, those must ha' been gay days. We are a poor company in their comparison."

"Poor!" says the Ordinary with spirit. "You say well. A parcel of scarecrows, set to frighten crows—that's what the pad is now;" and seemed very bitter about it.

In fine, we got very well acquainted, for the Ordinary was glad to pay me frequent visits,

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the other tenants of the Jug being little to his taste.

“There was never a scurvier company in the Yard,” he explained. “’Tis full of none but common canters and divers, rude fellowship for a man of parts; and scarce a golden roundle among them.”

There was the rub; and, indeed, it was as much the entertainment I made for him as the love of my society as fetched him so often to see me. For I was in no lack of money, and would constantly have him in a pint of warm ale, the which he drank with tender regard.

“Ryder,” says he, “I have taken a liking to you. You are no common file, like the riff-raff outside; and damme, but if you must wear hemp, you shall wear it like a proper gentleman with the very best offices at your service.”

He was a rare sodden rogue was the Rev. Josiah Phipps—for that was his name—and mingled piety with liquor and oaths faster than any man I have encountered. For the most part he was drunken, when he alternated

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between a desire to prove me damned and the whim of recounting famous exploits on the road. But when he was sober he wore a solemn face, and roared Hell at me, as he had been in the pulpit. There was never a man so deeply damned as me, according to him, with his firstlies, and his lastlies, and his flow of quotation from the Scriptures. And verily I believe the cully was in earnest, for there were two parts of him, so to speak: one crapulous and roystering, and t'other imposed by traditions and long usage upon his fleshly habit. But there were times, too, when he was neither drunk nor pious, at which he would talk shrewdly of the affairs of State and the conditions of the Government. Not that I cared a groat for them, but it was to my profit to encourage him into a lively friendship for me, which is ever best achieved by the fortuitous discussions that pass between man and man. And then, again, he would sometimes fall very low-spirited and comment upon his own affairs with the utmost frankness.

“I should ha' been a Dean, not to say a

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Bishop, Ryder," he would say; "I would have filled the place sonorously. I'll warrant I have a good voice, as you may witness, and there be people that have come miles to listen to my discourses to the condemned. I have a stinging smack in my sentences. I have made old Jerry himself heave with fear. 'Tis all in the accumulation, as it were. I pile my emotions in a pyramid. Each phrase hath an edge: it bites. I have seen the eyes goggling out of the whole condemned pew at my fulminations. And to think," he went on with a change of note, "that I am but Prisoner-Ordinary to a noise of gallows-birds! I that might have had beaux and wits and fine ladies trembling afore me. 'Tis the papistical leanings of His Majesty that are at fault." And with a sigh he would bury his nose in the tankard.

But all the same I made way with him, as he acknowledged. "I will admit, Ryder," said he at another time and in his most sentimental mood, "howbeit I wear the cloth, and am, beyond doubt, of a much superior state, that I am sincerely honoured by your friendship.

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Starbottle was well enough, but Starbottle, between cronies, was a rough-mannered tyke, with no gracious instincts. He had no more civility than a bear, had Jerry."

And now I come to the time when, my plot being ripe, I must make a push for liberty. It was a hazardous course, and I could not promise myself success, but 'twas better to take all the hazards in the world than to be carted meekly off to Tyburn. Thus it was upon the night afore the day appointed for the ladder that the Ordinary, entering my cell very sober about eight o'clock, found me with a doleful mouth.

"Ah, Ryder," he says, shaking his head, "'tis a long journey and a short shrift for you to-morrow"; and, being in that humour, proceeded to enliven me with pictures of the vengeance of the Almighty and of the baseness of the malefactor.

Of course I listened very anxiously, and when he had finished, I says, "Your reverence," I says, "if a man must die, 'tis wisdom that he should die with his belly comfortable. For

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the which consideration let us be merry to-night."

"Merry!" he cried, lifting up his hands, "a soul so nigh its Maker is more meet for prayers and fastings"; and then, his own stomach getting the uppermost, "yet I would not refuse any legitimate consolations of the flesh to a human being, more particularly as the spirit oftentimes cedeth out of the very weakness of the body." And this was the last flutter the rags of his calling made, for when the wine was fetched, he sat down to it with a relish, and grew garrulous, as was his wont. "'Tis a pity, Ryder," says he meditatively, and cocking an eye at his glass, "to see a handsome rogue such as you be predestined to a cruel end. I have seen many go to the Tree with few compunctions, and even with a sigh of content to be quit of their dirty company. But you, in a manner, warm my heart. 'Tis grievous that you should fall upon so evil a fate, and you with such a fine buxom career before you. But it comes, for the main part, of our bringing up," he

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says; "I have a philosophy by which I hold in private, and which teaches me not to condemn no man. This world runs so zig-zag; 'tis like a bolting horse. No sooner are the reins in your fingers but you are flung upon your nose and left with a bloody coxcomb on the roadway. We suffer the hazard of broken bottles, out of which the wine is spilled on every corner. Vessels, Ryder," he added sententiously, "fashioned, some for honour, and some for dishonour; and that is the way my eyes look upon life."

"Rip me," said I, "'tis an excellent view, your reverence, which is to say, that had you been Dick Ryder and I Prisoner-Ordinary, I should be stuffing the creases out of my stomach to-morrow evening, and you would be swinging and creaking 'tween the crows and the frogs."

"No doubt," agreed the Ordinary, a little uneasily, and filled his glass again. "You will understand me, Ryder," he went on, "when I confess to you that the topsman draws me strangely. I love him. 'Tis like

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a lodestone to see him with the noose in his fingers, looping and festooning and twining it so delicately beneath the black gallows. Lord, how many times have I stood by, performing the sacred offices of my high calling for the advantage of poor souls as was oozing out of kicking flesh." Here he smiled and seemed to recall the occasions with unctuous affection, but suddenly resumed: "But there is something further to my nature, the which confounds me. With this delight is entertained a strong repulsion, very antagonistic. My belly has retched at the sight of the Triple Beam, which all the while my eyes devoured with appetite. Explain that for me, Ryder, an' you may."

"Rot me," said I with a laugh, "but 'tis a cheerful conversation you would pursue. Damn the topsman, and here's to a merry meeting!"

The Ordinary lifted his glass and drank. "I like you, Ryder," he said, with enthusiasm. "There is nothing mealy-mouthed about you. You make a rare companion to a bottle. The age of drinkers is gone out; but Starbottle and

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I were notorious in the Yard. A paunch of the right sort had Jerry."

"Ah," I put in again, "this age is degenerate, and that's gospel."

The Ordinary rubbed his nose. "Rotten," says he with decision, "all rotten, saving only yourself, Ryder, which is a rare exception."

Now all this time I had taken little part in the conversation, being content for his tongue to wag, and still plying him with liquor. But presently, as his blood warmed, he grew louder and less deliberate in his words, and began to oscillate between his usual extremes of religion and gossip. Whereupon, seeing that my opportunity was arrived, I suddenly took my main step. For in the midst of his reminiscences of the hanging of Captain Crayes, I dashed my glass down hastily with my manacled hands.

"The Devil take us!" I cried, "but here we are guzzling verjuice when we should be floating an occasion in good liquor."

The Ordinary looked at me, drunkenly. "True," he said. "You have not treated me

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well, Ryder. The wine is damned bad, as I live.”

“And the more fool I,” says I, “when there is a gross of generous burgundy a-waiting for me in the cellars of the ‘Bull’s Head,’ in the trust of Mr Shackleton.”

I regarded him anxiously, for Shackleton’s was a name he must have known very well, and the “Bull’s Head” would have aroused the suspicions of a common dungfork. But he was nobly primed, and there was never a sign in his countenance save the marks of drink in his rolling eyes.

“’Sblood!” says he, “we will drink it all.”

I shook my head. “How shall it be fetched?” I asks him dolorously.

The Ordinary paused. “I will charge my own person with the job,” he said.

“But it will not be delivered to you,” said I. The Ordinary was too drunken to consider this difficulty, and so said nothing. “Wait,” says I, feigning a thought. “If your reverence is willing for the mission, why I think we may compass it.”

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“How so?” says he eagerly.

“If your reverence,” says I, “will proceed to the ‘Bull’s Head’ and offer a message to the landlord, I have no doubt it may be managed. And this is what you shall say, namely, a demand for a dozen of Captain Ryder’s rare old burgundy, set by for occasions, and Captain Ryder’s lamentations, but he would drink a toast to the lads at the ‘Pack Horse’ to-morrow an’ he had not other business with his Majesty. ’Tis a civil farewell to ’em.”

The Ordinary got upon his legs. “I will discharge it at once,” he said with a hiccough.

“Do not forget the terms,” says I, “or the landlord, as like as not, will send you packing,” and I repeated them slowly a second time. The Ordinary solemnly repeated them after me, and then, shambling to the door, was gone.

I wager ’twas an uncomfortable hour I expended upon his leaving, for it was odds but he would forget his mission, or that Shackleton would not understand, or that, maybe, he would be stopped by an over-zealous turnkey. Therefore it was with great satisfaction that I heard

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him return; and in he comes with a rush, his long legs flying, and a parcel of bottles under his arms.

“They keep a close watch upon you, tonight, my poor Ryder,” he says, “but I have explained unto the jigger-dubbers as we must spend the evening together for spiritual consolation and advice,” and he cackled with laughter.

But at the sight of the bottles I was well-nigh losing my head for the first time, and, paying no heed to him, “Let me have ’em,” says I eagerly.

The Ordinary drew himself up and put a finger to his nose. “Softly, softly, Captain,” said he, “’tis my privilege as the superior and your ghostly comforter to make the experiment first.” So saying, he sat down upon the floor a long way from me, and deliberately selecting a bottle knocked the neck off it with extraordinary neatness. At this my heart was in my mouth for a moment, but the next second I knew ’twas all right, for tipping the edges against his lips the Ordinary drank and gurgled

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as he drank. This done, he jerked himself towards me, saying: "'Tis a rare vintage, my Ryder, and I cannot conceive how my stomach abided those swipes."

I clutched the bottles from him one by one, leaving him to his swilling, and examined them carefully, feigning to observe the marks; but soon an alarm took me, for what I was in search of was not there.

"Bah!" says I, "the knave has fobbed you off. This is not his best."

The Ordinary stared. "'Tis well enough," said he, "and there's half a dozen more without."

"Why, fetch 'em in," cried I, with new hope, "maybe 'tis the tap I love."

The Ordinary, stimulated thereby, obeyed without a word; and no sooner was the first bottle in my hands than I saw at once that Shackleton had taken my meaning, and I'll warrant I laid it by with a mighty cheerful feeling in my heart. And with that I turned, smiling, to the Ordinary, and gave him a health, to which he responded with drunken gravity.

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Then befell a scene the recollection of which even now makes me merry. For I was myself in a lively mood, now that things were assured for me, and the Ordinary, heated with the drink he had already swallowed, and gloating upon the good liquor, soared beyond his previous behaviour in the extravagance of his meanderings. He had not a spark of humour in his body, but was as serious as a Judge.

“You will wonder, Ryder,” says he, seated very comfortable, “why I, who was ordained for great things, am come to this deplorable state. Females, my lad, cracks, cockatrices, for a start, and an uncommon devotion to the bottle, the which it is pleasing to consider, I have now conquered.”

“Well, here’s another glass on it,” said I, with a laugh.

The Ordinary dipped his beak like a didapper. “’Tis a sore pity you are bound for Hell-fire, Ryder,” he said; “but so ’tis — where their worms dieth not — a parlous state, lamentable, indeed, for a Christian to contemplate.”

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“Does your reverence mark me out for Satan?” I asked whimsically.

He rolled his eyes, and shook his head lugubriously. “Undoubtedly, you are chosen for burning, Ryder,” he declared. “I have given your case careful and prayerful thought. But the mercy of God which endureth for ever will be void before an addicted sinner like yourself. The Devil has hardened your heart, as he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and of old Clinch, that was hanged in chains at Hampstead in 1673. He was a rare one, was Clinch; a prettier hand at a job I never met. I have known him to take two thousand guineas in a day between here and Portsmouth.”

“I ha’ done better myself,” says I, for I was tired of this laudation of parties like Clinch and Starbottle; “I have took ten thousand in an hour or so.”

The Ordinary turns his eyes on me. “For the which you have lost your immortal soul,” he said solemnly. “Bethink you, Ryder, how little a thing is life. Rather lay up for yourself treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor

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rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. The advice, maybe, comes late, seeing that your hours are numbered; but, as I have not had the honour of your acquaintance previously, I have lacked the opportunity to put you upon the narrow way that leadeth to life."

"O damn preaching," says I; "let us drink."

The Ordinary smiled. "What I like about you, Ryder," he says, "is your generous hand. You must have heaped up riches. 'Twas a pretty business, yours; and all to fall into the hands of a wench."

But I would not take that from him, as I let him know. "Leave talking of Polly," I cried angrily, "or irons or no irons, I'll knap your ugly nose off"

"You are too hot, Ryder," says he, edging away drunkenly; "I meant no offence. Faith, I mean nothing but well by you, in proof whereof I will drink to a neat turn-off tomorrow." He drank at his words, and though I was angry I could not forbear laughing.

"O well," I says, "I'll join you there."

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“That’s well,” he says. “Friends should not quarrel, specially as their fellowship must be so soon determined,” and smacked his lips. “Lord, Ryder,” says he, gazing at the ceiling, “you’re but a young hand, smart for your age, no doubt, but lacking the master’s cunning. There was that job at Petersfield, now—Clinch would never have undertook that, nor Starbottle neither. ’Twas your impetuosity misled you. For my part I should ha’ waited for the fall of dark, caught ’em up three leagues t’other side, nicked ’em in the forest, and then, as comfortable as you like, I should ha’ had ’em under my pistols, with never a star to witness and wooden ears to hear. ’Twould ha’ been as easy as dismembering a pint of wine.”

He was now fair set upon his hobby, and I knew that he would not be drawn from the wine so long as he could fist a bottle. But I was minded to get to work, and be quit of the oaf, and so, says I, “Your reverence will perceive that the sands of my life run out, and the night is far spent. An’ it suit you, sure, I will engage for the remainder

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in watch and prayer, lest I enter into temptation.”

At the sound of this he pulled up and surveyed me with solemnity. “Aye,” says he, “Ryder, fall to your prayers, for thou shalt be hanged as high as Haman afore breakfast.”

“Leave me, then,” says I, “and take those pipkins with you, for what has a poor devil like me to do with mortal pleasures?”

“True,” he stutters. “There’s no further use in them for you, and as ’tis a pity to despise the kindly creatures of God, I will e’en put up with them myself.”

So saying, and hugging the remnant of the dozen to his breast, he staggered to the door, which, being unlocked from without, was once more closed upon me. You may imagine that it was not long before I had forth my particular flask, and fetched out of its inwards a sharp file and a short whittle. With the former I set to work forthwith, and after three hours’ hard labour had eaten well through the irons. After which, concealing the knife about me, I lay back and slept sound.

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I was awoke about sunrise by the coming of the dubsman who, with a few rough words of condolence, bade me to prepare for the cart. This was easy done, and presently I was taken forth by his mates, one of whom ventured to rally me upon my fortunes in ugly terms. I would have taken the brute a clout under his jaw, if I had not been restrained by considerations of prudence. As it was, all I did was of a sudden to go down upon my knees and plead for his pardon. The turnkeys grinned, and the same fellow was for lifting me up with his foot, when in comes the Ordinary, looking the most dismal ruffian you can imagine in the three kingdoms, but his eyes very determined and business-like.

“Hold, Roper,” says he, sharply; “you would forget yourself;” and then to me, “I am glad, Ryder, to perceive that you are come to a resigned and dutiful spirit on this day of reckoning.”

I rolled my eyes, and murmured some hocus-pocus to myself, with my nose to the ceiling, and the Ordinary looking edified, took a pinch

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of snuff. But after that I was pushed along, and came next into the open, where a great crowd was collected. At the sight of me there was some noise, and then what does I do but suddenly flops upon my knees again.

“Your reverence, I would wish to pray,” says I.

“Back there,” cried the Ordinary, waving his arm authoritatively, and gesticulating to my shepherds to stop. There was a roar from the crowd, and then there fell a hush, for 'twas scarce the conduct that had been looked for in me. Then I was gotten into the cart, with the Ordinary by me, and we set forth at a doleful pace for the Uxbridge Road. Down I pops on my knees once more.

“I would ask mercy,” says I.

His reverence stared a little, but quickly composing himself, “Aye, you have need of mercy,” he says, and lifts his own hands to Heaven.

Now this proved diverting to the escort, of whom the self-same Sheriff that had witnessed against me rode near by on a white horse. But I let 'em laugh, for I swore under my breath to

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visit them with a surprise presently. 'Twas a rare piece of fun to them, no doubt, that Dick Ryder was turned puritan, and Shackleton's lads, too, must have stared. For, by that same token, when we were at length off Soho, to the accompaniment of many groans and cheers, and a great concourse of people, I saw, sure enough, that Shackleton had took my meaning, for there was a string of 'em in accordance with my signal, outside the "Pack Horse." Here once again I fell upon my knees, and this time the Ordinary, who was being carried away by his growing passion, as we neared the Tree, fell with me, calling out his prayers aloud. And just then, glinting out of the tail of my eye I caught sight of Timothy Grubbe, all in a grin by the roadway. That somehow put the rowels on me, and with a swift movement of my arms I loosened the darbies upon my wrists and legs, and flinging them off with a clank into the cart, whipped out the gully and with a bound was over the edge and into the road, leaving the poor Ordinary upside down, with his long legs

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kicking in the air like a beetle fallen upon his back. The act fell with such suddenness that it took them all by surprise, but at the cry that was raised the escort reined in with some confusion. Once upon his legs, however, Galloping Dick was a match for any escort, and sending the nearest off his nag with a knock in the belly, I merely sent the steel in a flying stab at my old friend, the Sheriff, and was through the ring ere ever they might lift a weapon. A great roar broke from the assembly, but the ranks gave way upon the Soho side, as I ran through full tilt. "Bravo, Dick!" cries someone, and with that a shout goes up, and 'twas "Bravo, Dick!" all round. Shackleton's lads carved out a lane for me smartly enough, and ere the escort could pierce the crowd I was through the "Pack Horse" and out upon a private back-alley, as I knew, in the twinkling of an eye.

And that, as it chanced, was the method of my escape, which was for long notorious in the country, and concerning which many erroneous tales have been in circulation.

Of a Meeting near Fulham, and of a
Remarkable Part I played.

Chapter VI

Of a Meeting near Fulham, and of a Remarkable Part I played

IT has many times fallen to my good-fortune, in the exercise of my calling, to have encountered persons of high distinction, picked out for cynosures of the public gaze, and marked and predestined to fill a great part in the history of our times. There was his lordship, the Earl of Shaftesbury for one, a Minister of the Cabal, and a cock of the game to boot; and I could tell, if I were minded, of my meeting with Bloody Jeffreys, and of the trick I put upon him; while, to name no other, I had a mighty queer adventure in communion with that dirty toad, Titus Oates. But the sally that best pleased

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my whimsy, and for which, as it chance, I was the least fore-armed, was taken in more exalted company, and when I was yet green on the pad. And I here set my pen to the narrative with the more zest, that the man himself being now dead, and passed into sour disrepute, I am enabled to show him forth for what he was—a sovereign fellow, incomparable with a whole line of high-nosed Dutchmen. Maybe 'twas owing to my very rawness that the escapade took so full a flavour and developed so roundly, for, an' my wits had been a trifle brisker at the outset, and my eyes had plied smarter than my tongue, I might ha' stopped short, for sure, upon the threshold of the emprise, that, as it was, I slipped into the affair with a plunge, and for all the world like any micher of ten years old; and this was how it came about.

Having gotten into bad odour upon the North Road, and finding the jannizaries peppered about the posting-stages, I rode into London Town upon the seventh of May, armed with fat pockets, and distended, maybe, with a com-

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placent satisfaction in myself. I was fair bubbling over the brim with spirits, and ready for to cock a barker or flash an iron at General Monk himself, if so be the occasion should throw me across him. But after a day or so with other roysterers, and my temper still serving, out I flung upon an excursion towards Fulham, for mere devilment, and by no means because my purse was running low. Half-way to the village, and within cry of a tavern, I fell across a carriage, dancing along at a rare pace, richly caparisoned, and with out-riders and all the privileges of wealth. Nothing must suit me then but, like a lusty young fool, to drive myself square across the way, and despatch the horses back upon their prats, setting the coachman and the post-boys yelling in a terrified ubbaboo. And next I popped up to the window, and thrusting my pistol forward, exacted my demands of the occupant, ere ever he guessed what was afoot.

He was mightily perturbed and also inordinately savage, being as I could perceive, a nobleman of mark upon his road to some great house. To

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be rumpadded there, almost within the precincts of London, and upon a night of stark moonlight, and with a score of people within call, could not have been greatly to his taste. But his fuming served him little, for I relieved him of what he had, which, to say the truth, was not very much. I cared not a doit for that, but the distemper with which he took his predicament, together with my own giddy head, set me in a roar, and there I stood in the road, watching the carriage roll away, with my hands to my hips, cackling out of mere levity.

And with that, quite suddenly, a voice says by my side, "Faith, 'twas a very neat piece of horsemanship; and I've no wish to see a better."

You may guess that I started about sharp enough, and there in the moonlight, but his face obscured in the shadow, was a man astride of a big Flanders mare, coolly contemplating the vanishing coach.

"Who the devil may you be?" says I, very much set aback by this apparition, and fingering my pistol uneasily.

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His gaze shifted to me slowly, and he regarded me with a silent scrutiny. I was in the full light, and he might observe every galoon and buckle upon me. But, calm as he was, I was not to be browbeat by his insolence, and so, without further ado, I jogged the nag a step nearer, and says I, drawing my hanger—

“Well,” I says, “an’ you have observed my horsemanship with so much commendation, Sink me, but you shall have the occasion to test my passados also.”

“Nay, nay,” he says, laughing a little, “but I will take the rest of your reputation on trust, and without any test. ’Tis a point with me to trespass on no man’s calling.”

I looked at him in suspicion, but somehow the humour of his voice assuaged me. Yet I was not going to yield upon the impulse to any current stranger that might punch a hole through me when my back was turned; and so I came still a step nearer, and,

“So be you are honest,” said I. “Let us see old Oliver on your face.”

There was a moment’s hesitation ere he

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moved, but then, with another gentle laugh to himself, he pulled round his mare, and backed into the moonlight, where he remained, regarding me with a catching smile. He was a man of good presence, somewhere about fifty, as I conjectured, with a big nether lip, and a swarthy face, harsh-featured, yet moulded in good humour. I liked the fancy of him, and seeing that I was in a merry mood myself, was for hob-a-nobbing with him at once, an' he would. But ere I could speak he interposed on my observation of him.

“I trust,” says he demurely, “that you will keep me no longer under old Oliver’s scrutiny than may serve your need, for, to say the truth, I hold something of a traditional antipathy to the name.”

“Zooks!” I said laughing, “and so do I—a scurvy, ranting Anabaptist—a coystril as knew nothing of good liquor and good women.”

“You express the feelings of my family to daintiness,” he returned with his smile, “and I would that my poor father were alive to hear you.”

“You speak well,” says I, “and there’s many

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that would take a journey even out of Hell to spit upon old Noll's bones."

"I misdoubt," he says, reflecting, "if my father had designed that precise abode for himself. But it may well be he was wrong. For my own part I find, no doubt with yourself, this present world a sufficient exercise for my thoughts—the more so that it has sometimes used me shabbily."

"What calling may you follow?" I asked.

"Well," he says, with a sly look at me, "'tis scarce one for pride, but an' you press me I must confess that I have the repute of being a somewhat importunate beggar."

"What!" says I in an amaze, "are you a wheedler?"

"Ah," he says thoughtfully, "I believe even that term has been put upon me, but the word has an ugly sound, now I hear it."

"But," said I, for his appearance set the lie on his statement, "You speak like a man of quality. I'll warrant you are no common canter."

"True," he said suavely. "I am glad that you have observed that. I endeavour to be

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proportionate to my breeding; for, according to the acceptance of my friends, I derive from excellent parentage, though, it is obvious a man may not vouch for so much in his own person."

"What then?" said I.

"Well," said he, smiling, "I find my wits use me better than my birth; that is all."

"Ho! Ho!" I cried, for he spoke with such plain modesty that I could not but give him credence, "I wager you are a man of parts, then, to fig yourself out in this spruce fashion. It serves you very well, I dare swear. And now I am come to think on it you have the cut of a wheedler, and I doubt not also the maw;" and I fell to laughing.

But he made no remark, merely smiling very sedately, and when I was done I addressed him more confidential. "To be frank," said I, "I took you at the first, seeing that you were not in league with the Old Antick, for one of the lay. But I see you are not the bantam for that. Your face and your paunch betray you," says I.

"How is that?" he asked, looking at me dubiously.

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“Oh well,” says I, “you were featured and figured for an Adonis. That’s your trade,” I says, “and I’ll warrant I could pin it to you an’ I poked a little closer.”

He smiled broadly, and then putting back his head went off into a gentle inward laugh very joyously.

“My friend,” says he, when he had come to himself, but still chuckling, “you strike home. In sooth I had resolved to keep the matter private, but, egad, there’s no deceiving your eyes,” and he blinked at me humorously.

But meeting his gaze I could not refrain on my part, and off I went into a peal. When I looked at him again he had took his reins in hand, but, leaning forward quickly, I seized the bridle at the mare’s mouth.

“Come, come,” says I, with an oath, “I will have you know, wheedler or applesquire, that you are not your own master while Dick Ryder is in need of you, and since you have sought my company, by God, but you shall keep it until I choose.”

A slight frown contracted his forehead, but

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immediately his eyes lit up with that choice smile of his, and says he—

“My good man,” he says, “I had not presumed to quite such hospitable acquaintance, for in truth I am too little used to such fellowship as yours to desire to lose it hastily.”

“And what the devil,” I cried with asperity, for his tone was something superior, “do you with your ‘good man’? I’ll have you remember that I am any man’s equal, to say nothing of a damned Cupid’s.”

“As for good man,” he replied suavely, “I will not defend the adjective; and in respect of equality—why, I daresay you make a better thing of it than I.”

“Faith,” says I, seeing he spoke so humbly, “maybe I do. But an’ you take my full pockets to heart, there’s stranger things have happened than that I should put you on the road to fortune yourself. I ha’ caged a deal more goldfinches in a week than your kidney would gather in a twelvemonth. In a way I have ta’en a sort of liking to you.”

“You are very good,” says he, as humbly

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as ever, "I should be pleased to learn of you."

"Oh, damme," says I, "I'll teach you a proper trade. 'Tis better than to cozen old madams of their jewels, and to snip the fal-lals off young punks. Sure, that is a sorry business for a Quaker-bodied respectable old gentleman like you."

I thought he winced ever so slightly at that, but then, sending me one of his sly and smiling glances, he remarked—

"Captain Ryder, if you can teach me a profession proper to my years, I can promise you the gratitude of my friends;" and, making me a polite bow, he sat in his saddle, as though awaiting orders with docile attention.

But somehow (I could not say why), the terms of his reply deranged me. There was an air about him that was new to me, and I was bewildered whether he was mocking at me, or merely sitting at my feet like an ignoramus. I cast him up with as shrewd a gaze as I might, measuring him from his silver spurs to his big black wig which he wore in the

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last buckle. But soon he interposed in my inspection.

“Captain Ryder,” he said, gravely, “I am awaiting instructions of you.”

I laughed a little at that, being still in my perplexity, but he threw me a glance of reproach.

“I had scarce expected, Captain,” says he, “of one of your acknowledged and well-merited repute to mock at honest enthusiasm, however raw. Humble as I sit, I would scorn to put a slight upon any ardent heart.”

But I was none the more settled for this same speech, which appeared to me to have a savour of the ironic; and yet I could pick no fault in his demeanour. For all that, I was uneasy that he must be laughing at me, and so when he says more gaily—

“Come, Ryder, what say you? Shall we take the road?” I broke out in a blast of irritation.

“Damn you,” I said. “Do you think I have no better use for my limbs than to risk 'em upon a noddy that has lived to fifty years with-

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out having gotten even a hornbook knowledge of life?"

"The reproach, Ryder," says he, with an appearance of consideration, "is too cutting. I know women very well, as you must admit."

"And a fine field that is to grub in," I says with a sneer.

"'Tis very pleasant," says he impartially; and at the words spoken very takingly and with such an absence of offence, my dudgeon vanished and I broke into laughter again.

"Damme," I says, "you're the man for me, in whatever gutter you make your livelihood; and you shall drink me fair at the "World's End" to it, or by the Almighty, I'll baton your fat paunch."

The invitation was bluff enough in all conscience, but I suppose he accepted the spirit of it, for he replied, with a glance at his belly—

"Indeed, it is none so monstrous, Ryder, when all's said. But I will confess that it has outstripped my ambition by several inches. Yet do my friends assure me that it is in no

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wise out of keeping, but rather, if I am to believe them, of quite an elegant distinction. In truth, in my own little circle I am considered for something of a fine gentleman, and 'tis the fashion to aim at my precise girth."

"A plague on you," says I, laughing, "you round-bellied old hackney! You need rowels upon you for to keep you trotting, and a fortnight of Little-ease would best meet your case."

"I may come to that," says he placidly, "I may come to that, an' I keep such company."

It was a merry jest, and not for me to take offence at; indeed I liked him the better for his humour; and pretty soon we were seated in the tavern to ourselves, my lacemonger with a stiff brew of French brandy and me with a quartern of ripe ale. He pulled a sour face over his glass, for the liquor was not to his palate, but I jibed him on his dainty stomach.

"Faugh!" says I, "those light o' loves spoil you. 'Tis well enough. I know the stuff, as like as not the best brandy ever fetched out of France under His Majesty's nose. I would

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think shame to live so maudlin as yourself, and you with the makings of a man in you ! ”

“ I must apologise, ” he says politely, “ for my seeming discourtesy, for the feast is yours. And I have no doubt you are right as to the quality, but I fear me that my taste has been distorted by the stuff fubbed off upon me by my cousin in France. ”

“ Maybe he is in the trade ? ” I inquired.

“ Oh, ” says he, smiling, “ a good many hogs-heads pass through his fingers in the year. ”

“ Ah ! ” says I with a wink, “ and I misdoubt if it pays a farthing to His Majesty. ”

“ You are right, ” said he, with a laugh, “ But in truth I have no grudge against His Majesty, so be that I pay nothing. ”

“ You say well, ” says I. “ He’s not a bad sort, Old Rowley, but a lazy chicken-spirited dog. ’Twould do him good were someone to fetch him a toe in the hinder-parts upon occasion. ”

“ Ah ! ” says he, contemplating my boots with some interest, and then meeting my eyes, “ Is he worth it ? ” he asked smiling.

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“Damme,” says I, echoing his smile, “I don’t know that he is. Let him go to the Devil his own way.”

“You speak my sentiments,” says he.

But soon, what between the drink and the incitement of our talk, and my own new-found liking for the cully, my tongue began to clap merrily. To say the truth, I had purposed to press him upon his name and style, for I felt sure he came of some position, though probably lapsed in fortune; but, like the vain oaf I was, I fell to chattering more of myself than of him, lecturing him like a schoolmaster, and informing him upon the Art of Life.

“Now yours,” I said, “to my thinking is a dirty trade. To dangle at a petticoat, and to be kept in leash like a monkey,—’tis mean-hearted conduct, not to be assumed by a fellow of spunk. Not but what,” I says, “I cannot put a proper value upon a wench. Tame or wild cat, swart or red, Joan or My Lady, so be she have colour to her flesh and marrow to her bones, I’ll play the Spaniard with the best of them. But to stand for ever mak-

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ing lays against her humour, Lord, 'tis quite another matter, and worth no man's respectability."

He had listened to me very seriously, though I thought that his mouth twitched at times, and when I was done he observed with a deprecating manner,

"I fear you would put me to too rigorous a service, Captain Ryder. At my age——"

"Zounds, man," I interrupted on him, "You may be no green goose, but you've the vitals of a man in you yet."

"'Tis very courteous in you so to reassure me," he returned with a bow, "But indeed you yourself have reminded me of my habit," and he glanced at his stomach.

"Gad!" says I, "a week on the Toby will melt that suet."

He rose, laughing good-humorously, and with an air on him that somehow seemed to dismiss me: but I rose too.

"Faith," I says, "you are not for horseback yet. The ladies, sure, are not so exigent of your company. I promise you they will not

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grow stale for the lack of the likes of you."

"Tut, tut!" he cries with acerbity, "you ride a jest to death. I like a man that plays upon more strings than one," and then, "Come, Ryder, you will observe that I do not twit you with the Road."

"Oh, damn the Road," I retorted in a roystering way. "I am in the mind to expend the night after quite another fashion; and had you the spirit of a louse, 'twould be to one of them same ladies you would offer to present me."

At that his mouth suddenly quivered, and, his eyes sparkling, he laughed faintly.

"But," says he, "you should consider my profession. Where is my livelihood, should I loose you on my private liberties?"

"Maybe," said I, smacking my pockets, "we can arrange that atween us."

"Ah," said he, turning grave of a sudden. "here's sense and a commendable business habit?"

I winked at him, "Said is done," says I, and

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leaning forward, very facetious, dug my knuckles at his waistband.

Upon my motion, and very instantaneously, he withdrew his body out of range, and, his whole face changing, directed on me a short imperious gaze that stayed me in the act. Now I was fairly loosed by the liquor I had boused, to say nothing of the issues of my previous flights, and I could not conjecture to this day what inspired me with the recognition, specially in that bibulous state. But the fact was that throughout our intercourse I had had a growing uncertainty of him, and now, with that flash of his eyes, the discovery came upon me like a thunder-clap, and I fell aback, dazed and disordered, with the knowledge that here was His Gracious Majesty himself that had been my companion!

The revelation abashed me outright, and I stood staring on him, with all my wits aflow, the similitude of his features to the effigies I had seen of him gathering clearer with each moment.

But I suppose he referred my embarrassment

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to his smart rebuke, or to some drunken witlessness, for he smiled at last, and says he, "Well, shall we conclude the bargain?"

But with his speaking consideration came to me and I jumped up, feigning an eagerness, but still very damnably mazed.

"Sink me," I said, "for sure, and no time will better this." But all the while my brains were busy with the discovery, and 'tween that and the horsing I had opportunity sufficient to dispose my mind. And first it appeared to me that if it 'twas Old Rowley for certain, it would ill become Dick Ryder to subvert the entertainment he had chosen for himself; and that for so long as he was for being interpreted as a common Adonis, for such I would use him in conduct. Whereas, for a second deduction, seeing that he had put a subterfuge on me so far, damn it, 'twas my privilege to put another upon him, an' I might. With which determination my thoughts came to a conclusion; and presently, as we were jogging along flank to flank, I says, counterfeiting my former demeanour as near as may be—

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“What style do they put upon this cockatrice, you old satyr?” I says.

If he had taken any suspicions that I had unmasked him this must have settled them, and he replied sedately—“Faith, among so many I can scarce—but yes,” he says, “this must be Mistress Barbara.”

“Barbara,” says I, smacking my lips, “An’ I like the wench as well as her name, I’ll warrant Mistress Barbara and I should be capital company together.”

“Ah,” says he, showing his teeth in a soft smile. “But I would have you warned that this same Barbara hath a spirit. She is particular to the point of phantasy. I have remonstrated more times than I can remember upon her whimsies, but she will aye fly out. They will bear no remedy.”

“As for that,” I said briskly, “I like ’em best with the diabolic. A stark woman and a fist o’ nails for me! ’Tis a welcome diversion for a fellow of mettle.”

But all this time I was casting about to nominate the wench congruous to the rumours

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of the Town, and then the remembrance comes to me, and I knew 'twas the Duchess of Cleveland as he spoke of. And if I was in any doubt before, that resolved me upon the identity of my companion. But I said very little more, though screwed to the pitch of a high sensation, until we drew up before a house near by the village of Kensington. Here Old Rowley jumps to the ground.

"I had forgot to tell you," says he, turning to me suavely, "that there is a disagreement 'twixt the lady and myself, and it is odds that we shall meet a hot reception."

But I merely grinned, and presently, the preliminaries being arranged, we were admitted by a foot-boy, and found ourselves set in an ample room, enriched with many pleasant pictures and sumptuously ordered.

"Rip me," says I, staring about the chamber, "you are a prince among wheedlers to have the freedom of this palace."

"Oh, I do very well," he returned affably, and commands me some wine. But just as we were sipping of our glasses comes me in

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a strapping madam, robed in a magnificent gown, and her eyes like the lights in a black pool.

“You rogue,” says I to Old Rowley, “what an admirable taste you show, for sure.”

“I was in hopes,” says he in the same whisper, “that you would have attributed the taste to the lady. ’Tis a compliment they expect.”

But she then, coming forward very rapidly, started aback slightly, on seeing me and drew herself up, questioning His Majesty with her eyes.

“Madam,” says Old Rowley, bowing very gravely, “’Tis a friend of mine—this good gentleman, to whom your name being used with all admiration, he conceived a warm desire to be presented to you; the which, as one acquainted with your catholicity, I have made bold to grant. Like myself, he stands without the Law, following an illicit calling.”

Her brow darkened, and I could perceive at once from various ensigns that she owned

Galloping Dick

the temper of a shrew; and says she very coldly, and with an angry look at Old Rowley,

“I am honoured indeed by this gentleman’s admiration,” and then flinging herself into a chair, she cries petulantly, “Lard, what whimsy would you be at now?”

But Old Rowley starts as with surprise, and speaking in a pained voice — “When I tell you, Madam,” he says, “that Captain Ryder has kindly offered to instruct me in the delights of the King’s highway, you will see how much we should be indebted to him for the opportunity to add to our humble fortunes.”

But Madam shrugged her shoulders, and gave vent to a sigh of weariness — seeing which, I presumed to speak up for myself.

“’Tis true enough, Madam,” I says, stepping a pace forward, “what this old humourist says, but sure, he has put it so ceremonious that I scarce recognise the bargain. For ’twas concluded atween us both that, if so be yourself, as was like, being out of stomach with him, should be agog for a new ligby, why here’s

Of a Meeting near Fulham

a claimant for the honour," with which I flings my glove to the floor.

Her ladyship burst out laughing very sourly, and turning to Old Rowley—

"Is this true?" she asked.

Now I had thought to see him wince at my impudent suggestion, but, Lord, nothing of the kind.

"Why," he says, with a pretty smile, "'tis set somewhat coarsely, but—" and then, after a show of confusion—"Captain Ryder, you will perceive, would leave you every liberty of selection."

"I should be accustomed," says she scornfully, "to be subjected to your vagaries;" and stopped abruptly, seeming to reflect.

Presently she looked up at me with a different face.

"Captain Ryder," she says with a smile, "you will doubtless pardon my seeming rudeness, but this news has fallen of the suddenest. I make no doubt but we shall be better acquainted presently."

"Indeed," I replied grandly. "Better ac-

Galloping Dick

quainted is a phrase that, with your ladyship's permission, shall be invested with a private meaning."

"So it shall," she says quite softly, and looking at me with enticing eyes.

Though it is not my part to brag of my person, I have lived too long not to know the value of a smart coat and a pair of eyes, and I will confess that her ardent glances stung me to the midriff; more particularly as she next turned towards His Majesty, and with a dainty gesture of her arm, addressed me thus—

"Maybe," she says, "you can persuade your friend, Captain, not to obtrude himself upon us in this unseemly fashion."

"Why," says I promptly. "Now his duty is over, he may go to the Devil for me," and I took a step or so towards Old Rowley.

He seemed a trifle disconcerted, for I reckon 'twas scarce the deportment he had expected in her ladyship; but this was only for a second, and then he bowed very gravely.

"I feared, Madam," he said, shaking his head, "that this would be my reception, once

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you were seised of a fine bird like this; and so I warned our Captain here." And then to me—"Ah, Ryder, 'tis a heavy price to pay for your good offices upon the Road," and feigned to look chapfallen.

"Maybe," says I, in a huffing way, "But 'twas a fair bargain, and what would you? Should a stalwart, full-bodied piece like Madam here be pulled off with a cockchafer like you? Sink me, you rate yourself too high."

"In truth," he murmured, seeming despondent, "you are right. I have but a poor notion of my own pretensions, and yet I will confess it has sharply vexed me to be so discountenanced."

There he sat, the rogue, leaning easily in his chair, and with a lugubrious expression on his phiz, but his eyes, as I might perceive, very demure and luminous, shooting glances under his brows at Madam. But she avoided him coldly, and turning to me murmured some fancy jape against him under her breath, and went off into a giggle of satiric laughter. 'Twas nothing to the point, indeed, but I slapped my thighs and feigned to roar with her, while I was

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puzzling my brains to know what she was at. Old Rowley directed a quizzical look on us, and crossed his legs calmly. I make no doubt but he was diverting himself hugely, but so was I, for the matter of that, and the more so that I was resolute to turn the tables upon him. So,

“Look on him!” says I, going off again. “A muck-rake like that, as ought, from his investiture, to be a godly sanctimonious saint—to think of him philandering in the courts of Love!”

“Nay,” says Madam, ironically, “you must not be too hard on him. He is as God made him.”

“May He make no such other!” I exclaimed.

“Amen!” says she, with a vicious snap of her teeth.

Suddenly she bent forward to me, where I was seated and put her white hand gently on my shoulder.

“Captain,” she whispered in a cooing voice, “I will be plain with you. This man hath outlasted my endurance, and that’s the fact.

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Lord, what I have stood from him would amaze ye."

"You shall stand no more," says I fiercely, but wondering what mischief she was conceiving.

"Indeed," she says, very softly, "I am beholden to you for your offices. 'Tis he himself that has brought deliverance to me."

"That is so," said I, grimly, "I will quit you no more."

She sighed, and lifting her eyes to mine, thinks to befool me with her blandishments.

"And there is one service you shall do me," she says very low.

"What is that?" I asked.

"You must know," she answers, dropping her voice still lower, "that this same fellow has upon him a valuable necklet of mine, the which he has appropriated for himself. Wrest it from him," she whispers eagerly, "wrest it from him, and let us be done with him for ever."

At once I got a notion of what lay between them, and the origin of this disagreement. The necklace, I guessed, must ha' been destined for

Galloping Dick

some other light-skirts, and my lady being of a jealous disposition, was in the mind to capture it; while I was the catspaw, was I, to serve her ends. Oh well, thinks I, here's a new face to the adventure, at the least; and assuming a stern frown, I leaped quickly to my feet and made for Old Rowley, where he sat, very much exercised, I daresay, upon what we were exchanging.

“Hark'ee,” says I, “Master What-be-your-name.” He put his head to one side and regarded me whimsically. “If 'twere not for your years I would learn you smartly to thieve a lady's goods—and as it is, and to avoid delay, I will have you disgorge me a certain necklace as belongs to Madam here.”

Old Rowley started slightly, and a frown settled on his forehead. He had not anticipated this, I could see, and for a moment he sent a sharp look at her ladyship. But she leaned back and disregarded him.

“What do you mean?” he asked, somewhat sternly.

“Oh,” says I, mockingly, “I reckon you are

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aware of my meaning. He that steals from his mistress is a black thief, and you may be thankful if I do not prove that on your jacket."

He sat still, appearing to think, but manifestly perplexed.

"Come, vomit," says I, and I raised my hand.

"Sirrah"—he begins quite fiercely, and surveys me. Then all of a sudden he changes, and producing a packet from his pocket, hands it to me with a slight bow, but gnawing his lip all the while. "I acknowledge my fault," he says. "But indeed 'twas a present of mine to the lady, with a stone for every year of her life."

As he spoke I was dangling the toy in my finger, and her ladyship's face, which had been gleaming with satisfaction, flamed suddenly from her natural colour, and she cried out some sharp exclamation—for indeed there were nearer forty jewels in the string than thirty. But the possession of Old Rowley, together with the pat rejoinder which so put her ladyship about, tickled me so, that I could scarce forbear from laughter. And, sooth to

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say, as 'twas the first occasion on which I had confused him, I was mightily pleased with myself; and none the less that I was to upset her ladyship still more plumply. So dropping the trinket in my pocket, I went back to her.

“I have it safe,” says I.

“Give it me,” cries she, all excitement.

“Nay, nay,” says I, “but you shall wear it upon our wedding-night, I vow, not afore.”

For a moment her eyes were shot with fury, and then apparently upon reflection she used another voice.

“You dear villain,” she says in a coaxing tone. “How you would torment me! I fear you are a tantalising rogue.”

“Oh no,” I says, with a cunning look, “but tis my usage to drive a proper bargain.”

“Oh fie!” says she, “you misbeliever! Come, let me see an' it be truly mine.”

I shook my head, sticking my tongue in my cheek. “Never a blink,” said I, “afore that hour you wot of.”

Her eyebrows came down sudden. “Troth,” she says, with a toss of her head, “'tis not

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gallant to make such terms. Love hath no conditions. I am used to be trusted, Ryder dear."

And with that Old Rowley, who was seated very ~~in~~ unperturbable, and patting a puppy-dog that was in the room, glanced up at me. x

"That's true enough, Ryder," he says comically, and goes on with his fondling.

"There are times for trusting," I answered, "and there are times also for caution, but maybe this is time for neither. I will not be hard on ye. You shall exchange this pretty plaything against a veritable number of kisses—a buss for each pearl," I says.

"How dare you?" she cried imperiously.

"Hoity-toity!" says I, lifting my brows at her, and mimicking her voice. "No one says 'dare' to me; and 'tis but to anticipate the event by an hour or so, as you will agree."

"Sir—" she began, very still, and then she turned quickly upon Old Rowley, who, stooping over his dog, was softly chuckling to himself.

"'Tis you have done this," she cried angrily.

Galloping Dick

“’Tis your device to have instructed this varlet so to insult me.”

He turns a whimsical face on her. “Faith, not I,” he says. “’Tis your own doing, Barbara. You made love to him. Sure, I have never seen a woman court a lover so warmly.”

But here I broke in, counterfeiting a fury. “Varlet,” says I. “And who the Devil gave you leave to put that phrase on me? I will take no such words from no man, and from no woman neither.”

“Leave this room, fellow,” says she haughtily.

“Sink me, if I do,” I says. “Here I have come and here I stay; and what is more, I design to taste those pretty lips on this instant” —with which I made as if to approach her.

But she started away with an evil countenance on her, and Old Rowley sat in his seat, balancing a crown upon the spaniel’s nose, and paying no heed to us. But, presently, her ladyship’s face changed very smartly, when she saw me advance, and she called to old Rowley.

“Will ye witness this?” she says with some agitation.

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But he, looking up, and appearing to notice us for the first time, started to his feet hastily.

“Faith, I beg your pardon,” he says very suavely. “But I am fallen very forgetful. Sure, of course, I will not be trespassing upon two such billing doves,” and marched at once for the door.

But at this intimation her ladyship turned pale, and cried out for him to help her, retreating in his direction, and keeping a fearful eye on me. I was vastly entertained to see the jade’s consternation, for she was well paid for the strategy she used on Old Rowley. He came to a pause by the door, assuming an air of perplexity, and then, when she invoked him once more, feeling, I conceive, that the jest had run far enough, he came up to me, and tapped me on the arm.

“Ryder,” said he, pretending to whisper, but in a voice very audible. “You press her too closely. God forbid that you should fling her back on me. Twixt ourselves, I am well quit of her arrant temper. But serve her more gently, and with a proper approach.”

Galloping Dick

But I waved my arm impatiently at him. "Stand aside," says I "for I will buss this recalcitrant Orinda or be damned," and I reached out my hand as if to seize her.

"You ruffian you!" she cried, stimulated back into her haughtiness by Old Rowley's intervention. "I will have you whipped at the cart's tail. I will put my mark on you."

"Why, for that matter," I says with a laugh, "and I upon you."

But she gave a little scream, and Old Rowley stood by, seeming somewhat embarrassed, for it was plain what I was minded to do, and, sooth to say, my blood was hot enough for the job. But upon my venturing another movement she stamped her foot in a frenzy.

"Do you know who I am, fool?" she said. "I am the Duchess of Cleveland, I will learn you to use your hands on persons of quality."

"Oh, ho," says I with a boisterous laugh, "'tis high company we enjoy, for sure. Well," I says, "and I make no doubt that I am the Great Mogul, and this here will be His Gracious Majesty himself."

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Old Rowley, I saw, looked somewhat disconcerted, and, eyeing me sharply, he says,

“Come, come, Captain, do you not see that you have excited her so far, that she will seek refuge from you in any fiction.”

That turned me on him, for I was tired of the silly wench, and “Who the Devil are you,” I said, “to interfere atween a gentleman and his mistress? I will take it on me to teach you manners,” and forthwith I drew on him.

He was not at all put about by this, but smiled in his soothing fashion.

“No doubt,” he says, looking at my weapon, “’tis the ardent spirit proper to a lover, Captain, but you will perceive that you have drawn upon an unarmed man.”

“Well,” says I, “an’ I may not slice you with the point, I will e’en trounce you with the flat,” and I stepped to him, iron in hand.

And now for the second time Old Rowley’s face fell, and he withdrew a pace, while Madam cried out in an alarm for me to stay my hand, as I knew not what I was doing. But he,

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sending her a command out of his eyes, made me a pretty bow.

“Captain Ryder,” says he, with a rare mastery of himself. “I am in the wrong, for to lack a weapon is no excuse for a gentleman of honour. But an’ I may, I will remedy the want, and we may meet upon any terms you choose.”

“What would you?” I asked.

“I will send a foot-boy for my weapon, and a friend to serve us,” he replied suavely.

I considered, and then, “So be it,” said I, “an’ you bring no bullies of your own kidney upon me.”

“Yourself shall see the letter, Captain,” he says courteously; with which he got him swiftly to the table, and seizing a pen, scribbled me off a note, the which he handed for my inspection.

The epistle was innocent enough, and contained no hint of the circumstances, and moreover, I could ha’ fastened my faith on Old Rowley, that he would not employ treachery against me. But, all the same, and after the

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foot-boy was despatched, I passed the half-hour that ensued in a sweat of conjecture as to what was to fall out. It seemed that I, maybe, must presently cross swords with His Majesty's own self, the which, as you may imagine, I was in no haste to do. But then I considered that, with the introduction of this friend, the affair might dispose itself suddenly in a new way, and that it was this appearance that was to procure Old Rowley out of his predicament. And yet again, if that were so, I could not but wonder why he did not reveal himself on the moment. In fine I could not bottom his design, which, whatever it was, seemed comfortable enough to him, for he expended his time quite easily, frolicking with the dog, and conducting a casual conversation upon indifferent topics with Madam and me. To see him so urbane and unruffled you might ha' supposed he was the host enlivening his guests. But Madam had obviously passed into a state of despair, and bit her lips and looked frightened; and once she spoke, appealing to him.

“May not this farce end?” she says. Old

Galloping Dick

Rowley looked at her with a polite expression of surprise.

“Farce!” quoth he, as in mild reproach. “You take lightly what may well be a tragedy for me, Barbara. I wish I could simulate your deportment,” and resumed his antics in the coolest manner.

Just upon that there comes me the foot-boy to the door, with the news that a gentleman was waiting upon us below; and then I turned to Old Rowley.

“This is not to betray me?” I says very suspicious.

“I give you my word, Ryder,” he returned heartily. “I will hold no communion with him, and you shall explain the situation yourself.”

At that I ordered the lackey to bring up t’other, and soon there sounds a jangle of spurs in the doorway, and enters a tall fellow, very elegantly dressed. Directly his face was to me, rip me but I could ha’ cried out in chagrin on myself, for ’twas the face, as you will believe me, of no other than the cully that

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I had rumpadded that evening! In a twinkling I had the notion of that old rogue's manœuvre, but I made no exclamation, holding back as sober as a judge. The newcomer bowed politely to her ladyship and Old Rowley, who, on his part, answering the congee with ceremony, addressed him gravely.

"I am so unfortunate as to pick a quarrel with this gentleman, who will, on his own request, explain your errand," he says, looking at me without a sign.

T'other turns to me, with a little frown, for he was a staid pompous creature, and maybe did not fancy such escapades; and then his brows contracted, and he scowled very black at me.

"I think, Sir," he says stiffly, "that I have a little business with this gentleman that must take precedence even of yours."

"Indeed!" says Old Rowley, with an affable look of surprise; and then, seating himself comfortably, "Pray do not let me interrupt you then."

"Sirrah," says my Hector brusquely, "I see you recognise me."

Galloping Dick

Now all this time I was cudgelling of my wits to hit upon a plan of conduct. For the matter of that I should not have minded to try a pass with the solemn ninny on the spot; but I knew that His Majesty was seated as spectator to the play, and it would divert him which way soever the affair went; and I was resolved to derange his enjoyment an' I might. So, putting on a dumb expression of bewilderment, I stared on the fellow without any intelligence.

“Faith, you have me at a disadvantage,” I says. “I misremember to have met you.”

But he had grown very choleric. “I fancy,” he rejoined grimly, “that I may spur your memory.”

“You will be no bum-bailiff?” I asked innocently. He flew scarlet, laying his fingers on his sword.

“Let me recall you,” he says sharply, “a certain encounter nigh Fulham at eight of the clock this evening—when I had the privilege of meeting with a sturdy rascal, as like yourself as need be.”

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I put up my head haughtily. "Sink me, do you insinuate 'twas I?" I cried.

"You have been long in taking my meaning," he returned sardonically.

Here was the point for the diversion I had contrived, and so says I, suddenly changing my tone to sullenness, "You cannot prove it."

"I think," he says with a laugh, "my word will serve with the justices against a common scampman."

"You will not prosecute?" I asked in a cringing note, and Old Rowley pricked up his ears.

"Troth, and I will even now have you charged and clapped in Newgate," says he angrily.

"What you may do, you may do," says I very surly, "but I can prove an *alibi*."

"That," he says with a sneer, "you shall have the opportunity of doing in the dock."

"I can bring a witness to support it beyond dispute," I says.

"Indeed," he replied ironic, "and who may that be?"

Galloping Dick

“Why,” says I, “at eight o’clock I was in the company of His Most Gracious Majesty, King Charles the Second of that name, himself.”

Even as the words were off my tongue I looked at Old Rowley, but to my desperate chagrin he makes never a motion, and not an eyelash budes on him. ’Tis true that Madam gave vent to a little cry, but His Majesty himself sat as still and unconcerned as the dead.

“What is this?” cries Gold-lace, looking from me to Old Rowley in some perplexity, and as though uncertain of his cue.

“I fear, Captain,” says Old Rowley smoothly, “that here is some mistake; for, if you will recollect, ’twas I that had the privilege of your company at the hour you name.”

“Faith, and I made bold to recognise your Majesty,” said I, but feeling something abashed.

“What!” says he, opening nis eyes, and then went off into laughter. “Indeed, Captain, you have honoured me very greatly. But now I

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come to think on it, if you supposed me so, you have used me pretty scurvily for a prince."

"Are you not the King?" says I, feeling very sheepish, and somehow staggered in my confidence by his demeanour.

"Why, yes," says he waggishly, "and you are the Great Mogul, as we agreed."

I stood then, as you may fancy, much dumb-founded, and for the moment at a loss for words, but my Gold-lace friend fetched me to my senses; for says he in his turn—

"Come, come, my good scoundrel, you forget that we have not discharged our business. These shifts will not serve you."

At that I turned on him very savagely, for I knew 'twas Old Rowley himself, now that the first surprise was over; only I saw no way to deliver myself, and it made me mad to consider that he had been tickled to see me befool myself for Heaven knows how long.

"Damn you," says I. "An' this be not His Majesty, why, then, I will claim a prior settlement with him, afore I deal with you."

Galloping Dick

My gentleman said nothing, but glanced at the King, a little startled; and he on his part showed a few signals of embarrassment.

“Come,” says I, encouraged by this success. “An’ I may not cross swords with His Majesty, I may with a plain Master Rowley, shall we say?”

Hereupon His Majesty’s eyes lit up slowly, and the smile broadening on his face, he burst out into merriment.

“On my soul, Captain Ryder,” says he, “I vow you would make a very good Indian Emperor.”

“And you, Mr Rowley,” says I, as quick as himself, “would become a very proper king.”

“Nay, Ryder,” says he, subduing his laughter, but still gaily, “then, I believe that you and I are the only two people in the realm that think so.”

But the other two, both my lady and my lord, stared upon us, for their wits, I reckon, were scarce nimble enough for the change, and they looked astounded to see us conversing as if upon a mutual understanding. Indeed the fellow seemed puzzled to determine if I knew

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twas the king, and if the king were willing that he should be himself. And he stood like an owl, pursing his lips, till Old Rowley turned to him.

“I fear, Danby,” says he demurely, “that the rogue is right, and that he will escape justice this time. You see, if he were to call upon me I must testify to the truth.”

“As for the matter of my Lord Danby’s purse,” said I, stepping forward, “If your Majesty will recall, it was none so fat, and I misdoubt but we have expended all upon our revels. But an’ I may make restitution in another way, maybe this trinket will suffice for its value;” and down I flung the necklet on the table.

My Lord Danby gaped in an amaze, and Old Rowley, lifting his eyebrows, humorously glanced upon it with a rueful air, and surveyed Madam out of the tail of his eyes.

“Take it, Danby,” says he, “and forgive the varlet.”

But my lord, who was regaining his composure, raised the jewels gingerly on his finger,

Galloping Dick

and then, with a sudden assumption of gallantry, very ludicrous to witness in him,

“Nay,” he says, “Here is no trinket for a man,” and with a bow presents it to my lady.

She was hugely delighted, and looked triumphantly at Old Rowley; but he followed the gawd with a quizzical look of dismay.

“Oddsfish,” says he. “Had I bent to the inevitable earlier, we had been saved all this ado.”

“I would not have missed it for a fortune, your Majesty,” says I warmly.

“Ah,” says he, “I daresay not, Captain. But then you come off better than I, by my poor Danby’s purse.”

“Your Majesty had your share,” said I demurely.

“Why, so I did,” says he with a smile; and then suddenly he pulls out a watch from his fob, and regards it contemplatively, and says he, very serious, but inexpressibly comical,

“His Excellency, the French Ambassador, has now been waiting for me one hour and three quarters upon urgent business,” and covering

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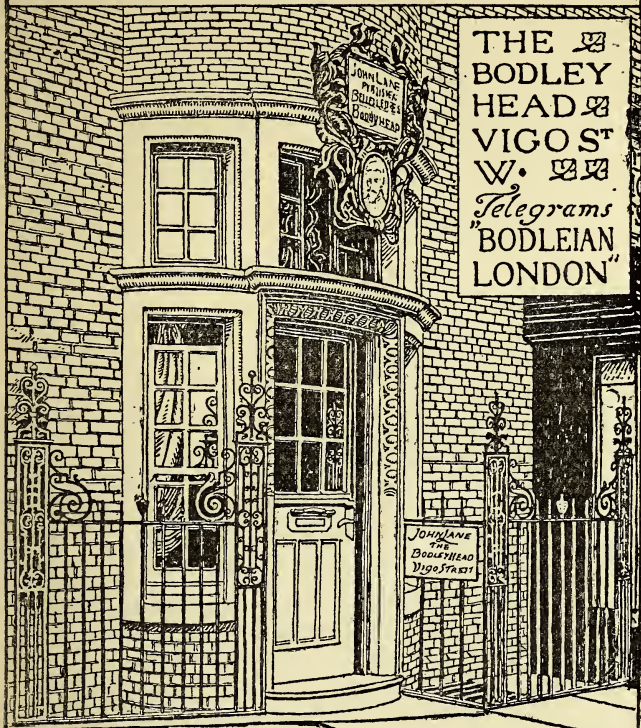
a tiny yawn, he threw me a genial nod and passed out of the room.

But as for me, I got forth in high feather, and mounting the nag (it was afore Calypso's time) rode for the "Bull's Head," mighty full of my adventure, as you will believe.



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